THE MASTER

J. WESLEY JOHNSTON

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THE RIDDLE OF LIFE
THE CREED AND THE PRAYER

THE MASTER

BY
J. WESLEY JOHNSTON

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WHY?

The "Why" of this book will be found in its reading, and only in that way. It will then be seen that these stories are not sermons in disguise. Nor are they concealed essays or lectures, theological or otherwise. They are plain, simple stories; and if the reader may have even a share in the pleasure of the writer, the purpose of this book will be more than realized.

J. Wesley Johnston.

Morsemere,
Yonkers, N. Y.

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CHRIST AND ZACCHÆUS

AARON, who was of the tribe of Levi, rarely allowed himself to be troubled by the murmurings and complaints of those who paid tribute at the place of custom where he sat. In his heart he knew that much of this tribute was unjust; that many of the taxes were iniquitous, that they were most unevenly distributed, and that in numberless cases it was shameless extortion. When he was first appointed these things disturbed him. His sympathies were aroused. His heart was touched. He felt keenly because of the heavy, crushing burdens which so many of the people had to bear, and against which they were powerless. But gradually he became less affected. His emotions were not so easily stirred. He could listen to the most bitter complaints as though they did not concern him in anywise. Sometimes he would even smile, or shrug his shoulders, when men would give vent to their harsh anger and scathing reproaches.

As the years went on he grew more indifferent to the feelings of those from whom tribute was demanded; his only concern was that the tax be paid to the uttermost farthing.

Nor did he care how the people regarded him. He could sit, therefore, at the place of custom unmoved, inexorable, merciless.

But on the morning of this day he was excited to a degree startling to those who saw him. And not without reason.

Standing before him was a man, a raiser of sheep, who held a scrap of parchment in his hand on which some figures had been written, these figures representing duties he was required to pay. He was taller than the average man, stockily built, robust, his appearance in every way suggesting vigorous, outdoor life.

"Do you mean that I must pay all of this," pointing to the figures on the parchment, "before these bales of wool can be taken out?" he demanded, angrily, looking at Aaron with eyes that seemed to burn.

Aaron nodded indifferently.

"Do you know what these bales of wool cost me? I had to watch my sheep by day and night, guarding them against the wolf and the robber, defending them at peril of my life. And now you would take from me every penny I had hoped to gain, have me deeper in debt than I was before, rob my home and family of the money we need for bread?"

With each word the voice became more shrill and angry.

Again Aaron gave the same careless nod. This exasperated the shepherd beyond endurance. Coming over to the table at which Aaron sat and striking the table with his clinched hand, he shouted:

"You thief, you robber, you traitor, you renegade! You of the tribe of Levi. To do this dirty work you deserted your own people, you gave up your inheritance in the priesthood, you became a tool and servant of the Romans, and because you can make money and grow rich by robbing such men as I am, you have forsaken the faith of your fathers! I despise you, I hate you, I loathe you!"

Aaron was now on his feet, pale with anger. He tried to speak, but his tongue failed him. He could only mutter and stutter because of the intensity of his rage.

The shepherd looked at him with disgust and contempt, and turned and walked away, leaving Aaron trembling with passion.

It was well on toward evening when Aaron left the seat of custom and started for his home in the city. This involved a long and often lonely walk through the suburbs, then only partially settled. Brooding over the shepherd's words and feeling their sting, he walked more slowly than usual, so it was almost dark when he came to a part of the road heavily lined

with trees, when in the dusk he saw two men rush out from where they had been hiding, and with heavy clubs strike a defenseless traveler. Aaron was no coward, and rushed at once to the help of the unfortunate man, but the robbers were both swift and deadly, for the man was dead and stripped of all his valuables before Aaron reached the place. There was light enough for one of the thieves to recognize Aaron, so he turned instantly to his fellow thief with a scornful chuckle and said,

"Have no fear! This man is Aaron, a publican. He is a taxgatherer."

"Yes, but he may have seen us and will report to the authorities in Jericho. It is murder, you know."

At heart the man was a coward and betrayed it in his voice.

"That makes no difference. A publican is not allowed to be a witness even in a murder case. How about it, Aaron?" And the thief leered at Aaron as he spoke. "Anyhow, we had better be going; some one, not a publican, may come along." So gathering up the plunder, the robbers went back to their lair in the woods, not even moving the body to the roadside.

The moon had now come up, and being in the full, the light was clear and strong. Just

how it happened he never knew, for no explanation was even attempted; but on coming to his own street he saw on the corner a little child, the daughter of a neighbor who lived not far from him. At that moment a chariot, driven by Dives, who was returning from some revelry, suddenly turned the corner, one of the wheels of the chariot striking the girl, throwing her to the ground, but, by a miracle, not passing over her, nor seriously wounding her. Aaron tenderly lifted the child, who was terribly frightened and cried bitterly, and carried her in his arms to her home. By this time the mother had missed the child, and hearing the commotion in the street, rushed to the door; when seeing her little daughter in the arms of Aaron, all the hatred and horror possible to a woman's heart found expression on her face.

"How dare you?" she almost screamed; "how dare you take my child in your arms? Don't you know you are not allowed to even touch your neighbor's children?"

Snatching the little girl out of Aaron's arms, she hurried into the house, leaving him standing at the door.

Going home, Aaron found his wife in deep distress. Some weeks before she had written a most earnest plea to her father, asking that she might be allowed to join him, with the

other members of the family, in keeping the Passover, now close at hand. His reply almost broke her heart. He told her that as the wife of a publican she was no longer his daughter; had ceased to be a member of the family; that he would not permit her to enter his home, and that none of her relatives or former friends would have anything whatever to do with her, or any member of her household.

"O Aaron," she sobbed, "why did you consent to become a receiver of tribute money, a tax collector, when you knew everyone would despise and hate you, and bring the whole family into disgrace? There isn't a home in this city or anywhere else open to me or the children except those of the same degraded class as our own. The children are made sport of on the street; women turn their faces aside when I pass; they won't even look at me, and you know that the dirtiest beggar in Jericho scowls when you give him a piece of money, then throws it on the ground."

After such a day as Aaron had gone through, this was not a pleasant home-coming. He realized, though, the bitter truthfulness of what his wife had said. But he made no reply. He was growing rich; that was the main thought in his mind. What if he was hated and despised! So he looked at his wife, as she

sat near an open casement, very much as he looked at some of the men when they came to pay their tribute money.

"I was far happier when we lived in our little home near the temple. I had friends. I could see my people. But now—" and her voice trailed into a sob.

Aaron's conscience, though hardened, was not quite dead. His heart, at times, had a throb of tenderness. His wife's mention of their little home of former years awakened memories that touched him far more deeply than his face betrayed.

Nothing more was said, a servant coming in just then to announce the evening meal.

Next morning Jericho was in a whirl of excitement. It got known in some way that Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, and would pass through Jericho, perhaps stay over night. This was a rare piece of news and spread rapidly all through the city. Business was practically suspended. Many of the rug merchants pulled down their shutters and locked their doors. The bazaars and markets might as well have been closed, for no one went near them. Early the crowds went streaming by, all eager, and all with one name on their tongues.

"Did you hear what happened to Bartimæus

yesterday?" a Syrian rug dealer asked, as he stood in the doorway of his store, speaking to his neighbor, who kept a bazaar close by.

"No, I was in Jerusalem and it was late when I got home."

"Well, they say Jesus cured him of his blindness."

"What! Bartimæus, who sat under a palm tree by the roadside begging! That can't be. Why, he was hopelessly blind."

"I am only telling you what everyone is saying. Malachi, who came in late in the afternoon to look at a rug, says he was there and saw Jesus put his hands on the eyes of Bartimæus. Malachi said he never would forget the look Bartimæus had, as he stared at the crowd."

"Did Bartimæus come home so his people could see that he had been really cured?"

"No. Malachi said he went away with Jesus and his disciples."

"Now, I don't doubt Malachi, but it seems to me that the first thing Bartimæus should have done was to come home. We would then have seen him for ourselves."

"Suppose," said the rug dealer, "we shut up shop and go with the crowd. We are not doing any business—won't do any all day; it looks that way now. Who knows but Bartimæus

may be with Jesus? We can soon tell if his eyes have been opened."

Just then Aaron went by. They looked at him, but gave no sign of recognition other than an angry scowl.

"Going to Zacchæus to get his orders for the day," the rug dealer said, looking after Aaron contemptuously. "What a thieving, cheating, dirty crowd these publicans are! If this Jesus of Nazareth is what people think he is, the best thing he can do for Jericho would be to drive every one of them out of the city, as he drove the money-changers out of the Temple."

"And I believe Zacchæus is the biggest thief and robber of them all," the bazaar merchant replied. "He came to Jericho not many years ago. He was poor then, and, more than once, I had to wait for my money. But now he is a rich man, lives in a big house, drives about in his chariot, and is growing richer all the time. Publican business is better than selling rugs or keeping bazaars."

"But I wouldn't be in his shoes for all the money he has," the rug dealer said. "His money is dirty, and almost everyone in Jericho hates the ground he walks on. But let us shut up shop and get started. Half of the city has gone already."

In a few minutes the awnings were drawn

up, the shutters pulled down, the doors locked, and the two men were on their way to join the crowd. Hardly had they left their own street and crossed over to one which led to the main gate of the city, when, to their amazement, they saw Zacchæus and Aaron walking toward the gate, as though they were going with the multitude to meet the young prophet of Nazareth. They could hardly believe their eyes. It seemed incredible. These two men, Zacchæus especially!

"I don't envy Zacchæus if Jesus sees him," and the rug dealer laughed as he spoke.

"Neither do I," replied the bazaar merchant. "They told me in Jerusalem that when he scourged the traders out of the Temple he spoke of them as a den of thieves. I wonder what he will say to Zacchæus, who is the biggest thief in Jericho."

Meantine Zacchæus and Aaron kept on their way, though finding it difficult. The crowd jostled them, pushed them, jeered them, forced them aside, laughed at them, called them all manner of names, gave them such rough abuse as usually comes from an excited, angry mob. Zacchæus, being below the medium height, was at a disadvantage, so he worked his way out of the crowd and, seeing a sycamore tree growing by the road side, climbed into it, and

sat there waiting for Jesus and his disciples. This gave the crowd a big chance for merriment; also to give full expression to its hatred and malice. And it certainly took advantage of it. Every little while a passing group would stop, point scornfully at the tree, give a derisive cheer; then go on to make way for others, who were eager to indulge in the same cruel sport. But they couldn't force Zacchæus to come down. They might laugh and mock to their heart's content; on one thing he was determined, cost what it would: he would see Jesus. Just what his motive was no one could say. Who knows but he may have been in the crowd when Jesus gave that matchless parable of the Pharisee and the publican, when the publican could only smite upon his breast and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," yet he was the one who went down to his house justified, not the self-righteous Pharisee; or some one may have told him of the parable of the lost sheep and of the shepherd's joy when he found the wanderer. From all that he had heard—and he must have heard much, for he was often in Jerusalem—he was certain that Jesus was unlike any of the priests or rabbis in Jericho. Then he remembered that at the beginning of his ministry Jesus had called a publican, Matthew by name, to be one of his

chosen disciples. So there he sat in the tree; not unmindful or indifferent to the mocking, jeering crowd, for at times his heart flamed with anger, but he had come out to see Jesus and see him he would.

Aaron, being comparatively tall, was able to see over the heads of most in the throng, so he remained beside the tree into which Zacchæus had climbed.

Before long a great shout was raised, as Jesus was seen coming along the dusty road. He could not come rapidly, for the crowd blocked the way, all eager to see the one of whom they had heard so much. Then there was Bartimæus, who was recognized by many in the throng, and the Syrian rug dealer and the bazaar merchant were rushing over to speak with him. It was by no means a stately procession. It couldn't be, for the road, though a highway, was not wide, and the crowd was growing more dense every moment. On reaching the sycamore where Zacchæus was, Jesus stopped. Instantly every voice ceased, for they were all anxious to hear what the prophet of Nazareth would say to the despised and hated publican, who had dared to mingle with them at such a time as this. But would Jesus know him? Perhaps he had never seen him. If they could only tell the young

Nazarene that the man in the tree was Zacchæus, the chief of the publicans, who, by extortion, by robbery, by false accusation, had grown enormously rich, they were sure that he would rebuke and denounce him in the most bitter terms. They could not understand, though, why Jesus had stopped on his way and stood looking at the tree. Perhaps that smile on his face, which seemed to illuminate every feature, was one of amusement at seeing Zacchæus in such a place, perched, bird fashion, among the branches.

Those standing near enough looked first at Jesus, then at Zacchæus; those who were farther back reached forward, anxious both to see and hear.

Then in a loud, clear voice, which could be heard by many in that vast throng, Jesus said:

"Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Zacchæus—the publican! The chief of the publicans! Could it be possible? He was not, then, a stranger to the Nazarene, for he had called him, called him by name, and was actually going to his house.

No wonder black looks passed from one to another, or that angry scowls gathered on so many faces. Turning their wrathful eyes to

the sycamore tree, they saw a rare light on the face of Zacchæus, and they watched him come down with the speed and nimbleness of a boy and hurry to the place where Jesus was waiting to receive him.

It was with different feelings from those of the morning that the crowd returned to Jericho. Amazement, wonder, surprise, anger everywhere prevailed. The name of Zacchæus, spoken in tones of bitterness, was on every lip. That he should be singled out in this way, and was now walking at the side of Jesus, who was going to his house as a guest and who would sit at his table, was beyond anything they had ever heard or thought possible. Not one in that crowd would have allowed Zacchæus to cross the threshold of his home; and as for eating with him, the mere suggestion was almost sacrilege. Zacchæus! Bah! And both word and gesture were of utmost contempt.

The home to which Zacchæus conducted Jesus fully justified the general opinion regarding his wealth. It was a large, almost palatial dwelling, beautifully situated in one of the most desirable suburbs of Jericho. The courtyard, where in pleasant weather Zacchæus entertained his friends, was so arranged as to accommodate scores of guests, yet have room for many outsiders to come in, and look

on, while the feast was being served. Immediately on arriving at his house Zacchæus called the steward of his household and told him not only to prepare for a large company, but to send special messengers to as many of his friends as were in the city, inviting them to meet Jesus of Nazareth. No second invitation was necessary, for the news that Zacchæus had been called from the sycamore tree had traveled far and wide, and the guests eagerly hastened to obey the call. As the meal was being served others came in, until the spaces outside the tables were completely filled. Nearly all of these uninvited guests had been in the crowd of the morning, and with those who had murmured, when Jesus called Zacchæus and said he would abide at his house. It was easy to see that their murmurings had not lessened in anywise. There were the same scowls, the same black frowns, the same angry mutterings; some of them not content with muttering but speaking so loudly as to be heard at the tables, where the company was seated. Zacchæus heard—he could not help hearing, and he knew it was meant that he should hear. When the word "sinner" was spoken, it was accompanied with a hiss, then a look at him, an ugly look, bitter and angry as it could be.

Rising from his place and standing where all could see him, he said:

"Master, these men," waving his hand so as to include the murmurers all over the court-yard, "say I am a sinner; that I have taken that to which I had no just claim; that by false accusation I have cheated and defrauded. I will not deny their charges; nor do I ask that they take their cases to the courts. Here is what I will do; from this hour one half of everything I possess I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man, I restore him fourfold."

Zacchæus remained standing, waiting for some of his accusers to speak. But only a strange silence prevailed. Men looked at each other in sheer amazement. The terms proposed by Zacchæus astonished them beyond measure. One half of all his wealth! Fourfold to any who had been defrauded! Such a thing had never been heard of before.

Zacchæus resumed his seat at the side of Jesus, who gave him an approving smile, one that Zacchæus remembered all his after life.

Jesus, being the guest of honor, sat where all could see him, and instantly every eye turned to watch what he might do after this outburst of Zacchæus. Quietly, but with rare tenderness, he placed his hand affectionately on the

shoulder of Zacchæus, then, speaking in that tone which he only could use, said:

"This day salvation is come to this house, for he also is a son of Abraham. Like many others—like some of you—he had sold his birthright. But he has redeemed it, and he has redeemed it at a great price. From this day forward no man can say aught against him. He is now my disciple, for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

And then followed one of those matchless parables, with which Jesus was wont to close his discourse.

As a usual thing Aaron was prompt in his home-comings, but on this day he was so late that when he entered the house his wife looked at him with some anxiety. She was sure something had happened, something too quite out of the ordinary. But she did not proceed to question him, as she sometimes did, regarding the events of the day, for there was an expression on his face she had never seen before. There was a softer light in his eyes; his mouth was not so set and grim. When crossing the room there was less authority in his step. Even his voice had changed; that she noticed when he spoke to one of the servants, for it had less of hardness and command. She

watched him closely, not, though, in a questioning, curious way, but with a sort of wonder.

Then he was more quiet than usual. Oftentimes he would speak of some incident at the seat of custom, of the various ways people would try to evade their taxes, and not infrequently he would laughingly tell of the tricks to which one and another would resort. But there were none of these things this evening. One time he would look around the room, which was expensively furnished, as if he were appraising each article, then at his wife, whose face, though sad, held much of its girlhood beauty, then into the courtyard where his two little children were trying to amuse themselves, for no other children could play with them. Finally he said, looking over to his wife, who was standing at the door watching the children,

"Miriam, I saw Jesus to-day."

"Jesus of Nazareth?" There was an eager question in her voice as she turned from the doorway to look at Aaron.

"Yes, I went with Zacchæus to meet him. We heard he was coming to Jericho. But, Miriam, do you know he"—going on to tell her of all that had taken place, from the calling of Zacchæus to the last word of the parable

given by Jesus. She listened intently, noting the peculiar excitement under which he spoke.

"And what will Zacchæus do, now that he has become a disciple of Jesus?" Miriam's heart was behind this question, and Aaron felt each throb.

"Just what he may do by way of business I can't say. But within an hour after Jesus left he sent a special messenger to Jerusalem to the authorities there, asking to be relieved as chief of the publicans, and the same messenger that carried the request of Zacchæus"—here Aaron paused, for his wife was looking at him so earnestly that he could almost feel the flame in her eyes—"carried mine as well."

For a moment Miriam seemed as one dazed. Not a word fell from her lips. Her breath came and went as though gasping for relief. Then with a low cry she flung her arms about Aaron's neck, tears of gladness filling her eyes.

"O Aaron, thank God, thank God!"

With the tenderness of a lover, he bent down and kissed her.

"Yes, Miriam, thank God! and thank him for having sent his Son Jesus to seek and to save that which was lost."

THE MASTER TEMPTED

"WHAT think you," Abijah asked his comrade and confidential friend, Zadok, "of John, the son of Zacharias?"

"From what I hear," Zadok replied, "he seems to be something of a prophet. People speak of him as another Elijah—a shaggy, daring man, whose life so far has been spent in the wilderness, but beyond that I know nothing."

"How long is it since a real prophet came to our people with a message from God?" Abijah's question was in a serious tone, for he was a devout Jew, also an ardent patriot and a firm believer in the hopes and traditions of his native land.

"There has been no God-sent prophet since the days of Nehemiah and Malachi, four hundred years ago," Zadok replied, sadly, for he was a Hebrew of unbroken lineage and earnestly longed for the redemption of Israel.

"And during all that time our people have been in bondage: no Moses to lead them out of slavery, no Joshua to head a victorious

army, no David to establish a kingdom. What has become of the spirit once so mighty in the Hebrew heart? Have we lost all hope or faith or courage? We have been slaves to the Persians, the Greeks, the Egyptians, and now the Romans, the most cruel and merciless of all. Surely, we are not to remain in bondage forever."

While Abijah was speaking, a troop of Roman soldiers marched down the street, for it was the hour when the guards were changed and the watch set for the night. Zadok waited until the clank of the armor had died away; his eyes, as those of Abijah, following the soldiers on their noisy way. Then he said:

"No, we are not going to remain in bondage for ever. How we are to be set free I do not know. But God has strange ways of bringing things to pass. It may be that this John, the son of Zacharias, is a heaven-sent prophet. Isn't it remarkable, though, that he should be preaching and baptizing just across the Jordan, where Joshua led our people into what was then the promised land? Abijah, suppose we go and hear him to-morrow. There is nothing in the rules of either your order or mine to forbid our doing so. We can then judge for ourselves. He may, after all, be a prophet sent from God."

Though they had heard many people speak of John and the general excitement caused by his ministry, they were not prepared for the scene which awaited them at Bethabara. It would seem as if the whole country had assembled there. Crowds had come pouring down from all cities bordering on the Sea of Galilee. From Jericho near by and Jerusalem more distant they had come in multitudes. And they were of all classes and conditions.

"Look over there," said Abijah. "See that group of haughty, scornful Sadducees? What brings them here? And right there you will find a big company of Pharisees," pointing first in one direction, then another.

"Yes, I see them, but have you observed the soldiers and the publicans? You might well ask what brings them here? Think of Roman soldiers and thieving publicans coming to hear the son of a Jewish priest!"

Thus they went on making various comments, at times speaking in undertones, for the spies of Herod were wont to mingle with crowds and listen for speech which might be deemed treasonable.

Along about the third hour, by the commotion and the crowding up of the people to a little hill, they assumed that John would soon appear, nor were they mistaken, for presently

there came from the desert the man all were so anxious to see and hear. Zadok looked something of the surprise he felt. But it was not surprise Abijah felt, it was amazement. For John perfectly embodied his dreams and visions of Elijah. And Elijah to his mind had always been the mighty prophet of Israel. With what boldness he had confronted Ahab! With what faith he had challenged the priests of Baal, daring them to a test on Mount Carmel! How strangely he had gone from earth to heaven, fearlessly entering a chariot of fire! Never was Abijah so startled as at that moment. He was fairly bewildered. Right there, moving rapidly, going toward the hill from which he was accustomed to speak, was the Elijah of his boyish dreams, of his young manhood's maturer vision. Tall, spare of figure, with eyes that burned with hidden fire, face bronzed by the desert sun and storm, jet black, unkempt hair falling loosely on his shoulders, a garment of coarse camel's hair, roughly fastened with a thong which served as a girdle but having his right arm bare, in his hand a long rod, evidently a wilderness sapling, he was indeed remarkable in every way. Zadok and Abijah deeply regretted being unable to hear all that John was saying, for the crowd was so great and they were at such a distance

that only when he raised his voice to trumpet tones could they discern his meaning. But they could see his face, observe his gestures, and mark the impression he was making on that eager, straining crowd. At times he would cry out, with a voice that seemed to fill the valley and reach across the river, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

"Zadok, why can't we remain here a day or two? I am anxious to meet this son of Zacharias. That was a strange thing he said when closing his discourse, and the people were so quiet we could hear it distinctly—'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' I wonder what John meant by speaking of One coming after him. I am inclined to think that John is Elijah, the prophet spoken of by Malachi."

There was no question as to the impression John had made on the mind of Abijah, nor on Zadok either, for he willingly accepted the suggestion of remaining at Bethabara for a few days, even longer if necessary. And they were well repaid for doing so, inasmuch as they were permitted to meet John and ask what he meant by saying that the kingdom of

heaven is at hand, and who is the Mighty One coming after him?

"Yes," he answered, his face lighting up with a great hope, as the sun breaking through a dense, heavy cloud, "the kingdom of heaven is not only at hand; it is here, and the One of whom I spoke shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant."

Abijah recognized in the words of John the startling prophecy of Malachi, and became even more convinced that Elijah had returned to earth and was now speaking with him.

"How are we to know this Mighty One?" Zadok asked. "Many times during the past hundreds of years men have come promising deliverance to Israel, but they have all failed, and in their failure added to the burden and sorrow of the people. Are you certain this Mighty One of whom you speak will not fail as the others have failed?"

"It was revealed to me in the wilderness one night as I sat at the entrance to my cave that a young Man would be baptized of me in Jordan, upon whom the Spirit would descend in the form of a dove, and that he is the Mighty One sent of God who shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

John spoke with such confidence, such manifest sincerity, as to convince both Zadok and

Abijah that something of great moment was soon to take place.

The next day when John was questioning those who were desirous of being baptized, they saw a young Man speak with him, and to their surprise they heard John say, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"

This caused them to look with deep interest at the One to whom John addressed these strange words. They saw a Man, perhaps thirty years of age, garbed much as a peasant or artisan, apparently a stranger from the hill country; yet there was something singularly attractive in his bearing and appearance, which seemed to set him apart from all of the others in that great crowd. There was a peculiar expression on his face, unlike anything they had ever seen before. It suggested a divine tenderness, yet a sadness almost infinite; it revealed strength and courage, which filled them with strange hope, but there was also that which made vivid the words of Isaiah—"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

In a way neither of them could afterward explain Abijah and Zadok felt an almost compelling desire to be baptized at the same time as this Stranger, but John waved them back, just as they were about to step into the water.

The day after the baptism John, walking with Abijah and Zadok, saw this Stranger, when he said, with an abruptness and an emphasis that were startling, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Then he went on: "Yesterday the sign promised was given me. I saw the heavens open and the Spirit descend in the form of a dove and remain on him. And even more, I heard a voice saying, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' "

"But we saw no dove, neither did we hear a voice," Abijah said, speaking somewhat reproachfully.

"No; if the people yesterday had seen that dove, or heard that voice, they would have been confused, filled with wonder, talked about it among themselves; some would have seen in the descent of the dove merely a coincidence, or regarded the voice as the rumbling of distant thunder. But I understood the meaning of these things, therefore the heavens opened to me, and the voice spoke to my soul."

As it was now approaching sundown, John walked rapidly away, leaving Zadok and Abijah to ponder over what they had heard.

On the following day they again met John, and while he was speaking, the Stranger, with

bowed head and evidently in deep thought, stood on the river's bank, not far from where he had been baptized, when John, with an intensity only possible to a man of his spirit, once more said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

The Stranger heard John's clear, emphatic words, for he looked at him in a strange, puzzled way; then with set face, as though a mighty task lay before him, he made his way through the crowd and entered the same wilderness in which John had his home.

"I heard some of his friends from Nazareth call him Master," Zadok said to Abijah, as they watched the now familiar form gradually lose itself in the desert.

"Yes, and by that title he will be known for generations to come. There is something about him of a quality I have never seen in any other man. He is quiet, unaffected, simple; there is nothing of pride or assumption in any form, yet the moment one enters his presence a feeling of awe or reverence takes possession of the soul. When I have been with John and heard him speak, I could but admire his sturdy independence, his striking forms of speech, the directness of his message, his extraordinary resemblance to Elijah; but for the Master, as we now should call him, I have a much stronger feeling than admiration. The fact is I love

him, and that love is the deepest passion of which I am capable. From now on he is The Master to me, as in time he will be to all who know him."

Though Zadok had been a close friend of Abijah for many years, he had never heard him speak with such earnestness or profound conviction as at that moment.

Soon after these two, now devoted disciples of John, left Bethabara and returned to their homes in Jericho.

A wild, dread place was the wilderness to which the Master retired after his baptism by John. Unlike in every way to his home in Nazareth, the contrast must have been startling. In Nazareth there were the gentle hills sloping northward, from which could be seen the Jordan Valley and in the distance the gleam of the restless sea. But in the wilderness there was nothing of peace; it was nature distorted, misshapen, malignant; masses of frowning rocks; gnarled and twisted roots of trees torn up by some mad storm; lairs where wild beasts lay crouching for their prey; dark, fearsome caves, from which daring, brutal robbers came out in bands, a scourge and terror to all that region. Yet, strange as it may seem, the tumult, the confusion, the disorder of the wilderness in large measure reflected the feel-

ing in the Master's heart. For up among the Galilæan hills, when, at times, there would break upon him the vision of his mission to the world, he would see so much that was peaceful that his task seemed comparatively easy. There were the valleys, beauty spots of even the luxuriant East, laden as nowhere else with flowers of every form and color, vineyards purpling in the sun, orchards rich with all manner of fruit, sheep thronging the pastures, doves nesting in the trees, and the air sweet with grateful perfume. It surely could not be an infinite burden to redeem such a world as this, where everything was at peace. But when he came to the baptism of John and saw the world as it really was; when he looked at the hardened, cruel faces of the soldiers, brutal in their speech and bearing; the selfish, avaricious publicans, without mercy or conscience; the boasting Pharisees, whose religious life was all mockery and sham, with hearts full of hidden and fearful sin; the haughty Sadducees, to whom every form of faith was a derision and who denied all life beyond the grave: when he saw all these, and then the great crowd, whose chief concern was with what they should eat and drink, without spiritual aspiration or desire, then he realized the magnitude of the commission with which he had been intrusted,

and the awful sacrifice that commission involved. No wonder he fled to the wilderness. Only in solitude, with anxious prayer, and long-continued fasting, could he face the terrible issues that lay before him. To ask him to redeem such a world as he had seen in the valley of the Jordan, a callous, unfeeling, false, treacherous, selfish, sodden world, was a burden so heavy as to send him to the wilderness, where, unseen by mortal eye, he might fight out the battle that was raging in his soul. He thought nothing of food or of physical comfort. He gave no heed to the wild beasts as they prowled through the brushwood, or the yet wilder beasts in human form, who went forth to rob and murder. His one concern was with the duty to which he had been appointed. How could that duty be met? What was the sacrifice required of him? John had called him the Lamb of God, and wasn't the lamb always slain, then presented as an offering? What did John mean by using a sacrificial term? For days and weeks the struggle went on, the body growing weaker until merciless hunger set in.

Then a voice, sardonic, mocking, malignant, broke upon the silence of the wilderness by saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

No taunt could have been more cruel, no

word more heartless. Only a dastard, and he of the lowest type, would have spoken in such fashion.

Here was a young Man weakened by midnight vigils, exhausted by long-continued prayer, engaged in a battle which has taxed every energy of his soul, a battle of such tremendous moment as to involve the destiny of the entire world, and now faint and weak with hunger; but instead of companionship, or sympathy, the sneering, mocking voice only says:

"You claim to be the Son of God. You expect to be received as the One appointed to deliver Israel. Prove it. Prove that a voice from heaven spoke to you in Jordan. Prove that the Spirit of God descended on you in the form of a dove. You have been in this wilderness for forty days preparing for your work, as the heaven-sent Messiah. Why not begin your work now? You are hungry: here are stones. If you are the Son of God, one word from you and these stones will change into bread. God surely doesn't want his Son to perish with hunger. And if you perish, what about the work you came to do? Why make a needless sacrifice?"

Thus the Tempter went on, gloating over the worn, weary Man, hoping to goad him into

speaking the word which would relieve his hunger.

Quicker than lightning's flash the Master's thoughts went back to another scene, where this same Tempter, only in a different form, whispered cunningly: "Why not eat of the fruit? Then your eyes will be opened and ye shall be as gods."

In the garden it was fruit; in the wilderness it was bread; in the garden it was the woman who was tempted; in the wilderness it was the seed of the woman who faced the Tempter; but he, instead of falling into the snare, answered in a voice which contained neither doubt nor fear, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Evidently the seed of the woman had found the serpent's head and placed his heel on it.

Then another suggestion was made, for the Evil One is not easily baffled.

"True; what you have said is written, so also is this: 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' Suppose we go now to the Temple, to the pinnacle which can be seen by the crowds in the courtyard who assemble there daily, then, when they are looking up,

wondering at our presence in such a place—for no one except the builders has ever climbed that tower—you cast yourself down, and when you light softly on the marble pavement, unhurt in the least degree, the multitude will at once receive you as the One long promised. No man could cast himself from that pinnacle without being broken and crushed to death. But if you do it, your claim as the Son of God will be established at once. Let the people see in this supreme miracle with what power you have been invested and instantly they will recognize you as the Messiah."

It was very artful, strangely plausible, and so subtle that with any other one but the Master it would have succeeded.

Again his thoughts flashed back to distant years. He had not read the Scriptures in vain. Immediately he recalled times and places where the people had been proud of their strength, arrogant in their assumption of divine support, taken unfair advantage of the promised help of God, and actually presumed upon the fact that he had chosen them specially as his own. They had been tempted in a wilderness, just as he was being tempted, only they had fallen; yielded to the subtle, alluring snare. Hence they were bitten by serpents. Death in various forms came upon them. Even Moses was

denied the land of promise. To win his way into the Messiahship by a daring leap from the Temple pinnacle would seem to save years of toil and sacrifice, but better that than presumption, or a spectacular display of miraculous power, a display that would only excite passing wonder and effect no real good.

So again the Master answered, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

There was something so calm, so strong, so much of quiet confidence in the Master's reply that the Tempter knew he had failed in his purpose. Still he would not give up. There was too much at stake. To be beaten now meant utter defeat sooner or later. It was only a question of time. If this young Galilæan, here in the wilderness, weary with the soul struggle of forty days, pale and worn through ceaseless nights of agony and prayer, enfeebled by hunger and exposure, should win now, what supreme victories would be his in days to come!

So, recognizing that the Master's claim to the Messiahship could be no longer doubted, he suggested something far more startling than changing stones into bread or leaping from the pinnacle of the Temple.

"Why not go to Mount Pisgah, where Moses had a view of the promised land, or, better

still, to Mount Hermon, which has a wider range for the eye, and I will show you the kingdoms now under my sway. I govern them; they are mine. Now, all this power will I give thee and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine."

Not since the world had a beginning was ever such bribe held out to a human soul. And the Master was never more human than at that moment. Human desires moved in his soul. Human ambitions stirred in his heart. Human blood throbbed in his veins. Human hunger was ravaging his body. He leaned forward and looked searchingly into the Tempter's face, to be certain he had heard aright, that the offer just made was not a wild, unmeaning boast. But the face into which he looked assured him that the amazing proposal presented so alluringly had back of it all the resources of the kingdom of darkness. Drops of blood then began to gather on his forehead. A strange anxiety entered his heart. Might not this open a way, by which the tragedy of the cross could be averted? Perhaps he has misunderstood the dreams and visions of his early years in Nazareth. What if he had taken from the words of John a meaning which was

never intended? It was possible that all of the divine purpose had not been revealed to him. In an agony of prayer he looked to the starlit sky hoping for a sign, but none was given. He listened longingly for a voice such as that he had heard in Jordan, but no voice broke the awful silence of that hour. The blood drops, which in the beginning had gathered only on his brow, now covered his face, so intense was the struggle raging in his soul. In the dim light the face of the Tempter seemed full of fiendish delight, for he could see the fearful strain under which the Master was laboring, and was confident he would yield in the end. But in order to make certain, he broke the desert silence by saying:

"If you refuse, all hell, from this hour, will be against you. I will have you persecuted the day you begin your ministry. The priests, the elders, the scribes, will follow you with unrelenting hate. If you work any miracles, I will have it said you are in league with me. Every claim you make as the Messiah will be laughed to scorn. You will be denounced as a deceiver. You will be doubted, deceived, betrayed, crucified, and all for a people who are not worthy, who deserve nothing at your hands, and who would rather live as they are; for they have no desire for such a gospel as

yours. Why not bow the knee to me? We are alone, no one will see, no one need know. Go back to Nazareth. Give up this wild notion about redeeming the world. The world has no wish to be redeemed. And if it had how could you redeem it? You are a mere village carpenter, without friends or influence. People will say you are mad."

The Tempter stopped abruptly. He saw something more than blood on the face of the Master. He saw such a flame in his eyes as made him tremble. Then in a voice Godlike in its imperious demand he heard him say, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The fearful struggle was over. The terrible battle was fought and won; but He who had won the battle was so spent, so drained of energy and strength, that only the angels of God could minister to him.

CHRIST AND NICODEMUS

"MASTER," said Mary, looking over to where Jesus was quietly resting—for he was weary after a long, hard day, and had returned from Jerusalem to Bethany —"I saw Nicodemus in the city not long ago, and he seemed anxious to meet you, and asked me to arrange for some evening when he might call and speak with you."

"And who is Nicodemus?" Jesus replied, in that rich, mellow voice which he always used when speaking to those who were dear to him.

"Nicodemus is a member of the Council; he is a prominent Pharisee; he is highly regarded by all who know him, and has a large circle of friends," Mary answered. "Lazarus often speaks of him, and always in terms of respect. He is kindly to everyone, and very generous, especially to the poor."

"Why does he wish to see me?" Jesus asked, in the same tone as before.

Mary smiled before saying: "Naturally, he would want to see you. Being one of the Council, he was soon informed of how you had driven out the buyers and sellers from the Temple and overturned the money-changers'

tables. He said to Lazarus it was a daring thing to do, and he was glad you had done it."

"That was rather an exciting day," Jesus said, in a low, grave voice, though a faint smile could be seen, as if there were something humorous in his memory of the angry but frightened men chasing each other out of the Temple courtyard.

"Nicodemus had also heard of you being at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, when it was said you changed water into wine. He met Martha the other day in Jerusalem and spoke of it to her."

Again Jesus smiled. He remembered that Martha was the housekeeper, and the incident at the wedding would appeal to her.

Mary went on: "He has talked quite freely with Peter and John, John specially, asking all manner of questions about you. He has an idea you are a prophet of some kind, but is afraid the people may misunderstand your teaching and have an impression that you are the Messiah. In that case he fears there would be serious trouble."

Mary's voice almost broke, for she had learned to love with all the wealth of her soul this young Carpenter of Nazareth. That any harm should come to him was more than she could bear even to think of.

Jesus instantly detected the stress under which Mary spoke, for he tenderly loved her, and also Martha and Lazarus. "When is Nicodemus likely to come?" he asked, in an easy, familiar way, evidently with the purpose of relieving Mary from the anxiety which for the moment disturbed her.

"I said he might come this evening, but I didn't know when speaking to him that you were going to have such a long, hard day. Please let me send him word by Lazarus that you are weary, and cannot meet him until another time." Mary looked wistfully as she spoke.

"Ah! Mary," said Jesus, and this time his voice was even more rich and mellow. "I am never too weary to meet an earnest, inquiring soul. All I ask is that those who come shall be sincere. It is my meat and my drink to meet such people, and the greater their need, the greater is my desire to help them. You think Nicodemus is sincere, that he is not prompted by mere curiosity, and that he is really anxious to learn of my teachings? If so, why does he come at night? Why not be present at some of the public services? I teach almost daily in the Temple, and it is my regular custom to attend the synagogue. Surely it cannot be, if he is sincere, that he is afraid or ashamed to

meet me in the daytime. Perhaps, Mary, he is not so much in earnest as you think, and the motive back of his desire not just what you imagine it is."

"I don't think Nicodemus is afraid or ashamed, but he is a very timid man," Mary said. "He has the name of being cautious, overprudent perhaps; then he is comparatively old, and you know, Master, that old people are disposed to be guarded and careful in their ways."

For a few moments there was silence, Jesus meanwhile looking at the gathering twilight. Then Mary spoke again: "I think Nicodemus is wise in coming at night. Being a member of the Council, his opinions carry great weight; people look up to him, follow his example, and are guided largely by what he says and does. Now, isn't it much better that he come and hear from your own mouth the things you are teaching, so that when he is asked he can make proper reply?"

While Mary was speaking Jesus gave her a rarely beautiful smile, then said: "You are indeed my disciple, for I teach, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' and 'with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' Some people would have said Nicodemus was a coward in proposing to come at night, and

so misjudged him. Instead you offer an explanation. The world generally does the other thing—looks for something to censure, to find fault with, to complain of, and very rarely looks for what is best."

Soon Martha came in, busy and bustling as usual, for she had charge of the home; later Lazarus came from the city, to which he went on business every day, returning in time for the evening meal.

Shortly after moonrise a man might have been seen to leave his home, which was on a street not far from the Temple, and wend his way to the outskirts of Jerusalem, using the road which Jesus would use on the first day of the Passion Week, and after a walk of about two miles, come to the village of Bethany. Though this man was of the wealthy class, and could have been attended by a servant, he was alone; for the errand on which he was going was not one in which his household retainers might share. He was well along in years, but his step was firm, yet not rapid; indeed, his every movement was quiet and thoughtful. It was bright moonlight when Nicodemus—for it was he—reached the home of Lazarus, and Mary opened the door, admitting him to the household where Jesus was an honored guest.

"Master," said Nicodemus, after Mary had

presented him, "I am indeed grateful for the privilege of meeting you. So far I have not been able to be present in the Temple at any of the times when you have been teaching, but I have heard of you in so many ways that I have been constrained to come and see and hear for myself."

"What have you heard?" Jesus asked, and so pleasantly that Nicodemus looked at him with surprise. He had come prepared to meet a man like John the Baptist, with a rough, harsh voice, stern, forbidding manner, ready to denounce angrily any who differed from his teachings. Instead he saw a young man of about thirty years of age, with a bearing dignified and courtly as his own, a tender, expressive face; in every way different from the person he had imagined Jesus to be.

Nicodemus hesitated. He could not well tell Jesus, at this first interview, and in the presence of Mary (for Martha had gone to attend to her household duties, and Lazarus was busy with some concerns of his own), all of the things he had heard regarding this Nazarene. For some of these things were far from pleasant. Angry, even fierce, discussions had already taken place in the Council, and some of the members were exceedingly bitter in their denunciations, classing Jesus as one of the

most dangerous and willful deceivers Judæa had ever known. Nicodemus had been present at several meetings of the Council when the very name of Jesus seemed to arouse the most intense passion; when he was branded as an impostor, and his miracles spoken of as the work of the devil. Then the priests, some high in authority, were furious because Christ had driven out the buyers and sellers from the Temple, for they were in league with these men and shared their vile profits. In this angry whirl and tempest Nicodemus took no part, but heard and saw all the more because he was not drawn into the strife. So he hesitated when asked concerning what he had heard. He looked at Mary and wondered if he might frankly answer the question of Jesus. Then he remembered that Jesus was her guest; to speak, therefore, with any degree of freedom would outrage her hospitality. So the question was not answered. But Nicodemus had not lived so many years in vain. Nor had he failed to take advantage of his membership in the Council. Hence he was suave, bland, gracious, and possessed of a full measure of Oriental courtesy. So instead of telling Jesus any of the things he had heard, he said, in his deferential and courtly way: "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man

can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him."

Now, any member of the Council might have heard him make that courteous remark, for it really meant nothing more than a kindly salutation. If Christ answered in like manner, then the way was open for a frank discussion of the Messiahship, for which he had come thoroughly prepared. In fact, ever since he had arranged with Mary for this interview, Nicodemus gave all his spare time, and some he couldn't spare, to a careful study of the Prophets, and their predictions concerning the coming Messiah. Not content with this, he had talked at length with the older members of the Council, going even to some of the chief priests. He had also made diligent inquiries about Jesus, sending special agents to Nazareth, who carefully gathered up every item of information, which was quietly forwarded to him. Through these agents he learned that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, when Joseph and Mary, his mother, had gone to be taxed, as the law required; that when he was twelve years of age he went to Jerusalem with his parents to keep the Passover, and that while there he had gone to the Temple, astonishing the rabbis with his questions and answers. He also learned that Joseph was a carpenter in Naza-

reth, and that Jesus made his home with him and worked in the same shop. These agents did not fail to tell Nicodemus of Jesus being baptized by John in the Jordan, when, it was said, a beautiful bird, a dove some thought, descended from heaven and lighted on him, and that there was a great Voice which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." They were careful also to say that the next day after this baptism they saw John the Baptist point directly to Jesus, then say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

All these things caused Nicodemus much perplexity. He couldn't understand how the Messiah, or even a prophet, was possible in such a place as Nazareth; for Nazareth was a byword, and was held in general contempt. Still, he could not get rid of the idea that Jesus was something more than an ordinary man, else how could he perform the miracles which people said he did?

It was therefore with much disturbance of mind he came to the house of Lazarus. Still he was determined not to commit himself in anywise. As a ruler of the Jews he felt his responsibility. Hence his very careful though courteous salutation.

Jesus looked at him for a few moments with

such a look as he had never experienced before —a look that seemed to read the thoughts and intents of his heart; then in a voice, mild but emphatic, he said: "Nicodemus, you came here to talk with me about the Messiahship, to find out if my claims are justified. You would like now to discuss the matter. You are a ruler of the Jews. You are familiar with the Law and the Prophets. It would please you to go back to the Council and be able to say that you had held an argument with the man from Nazareth, and in that argument had maintained the opinion of the Council regarding me and my work. But"—and here the voice of Jesus became stronger and more resonant—"Nicodemus, what I am about to say is of more value than all the traditions of your Council, all of the laws provided for the services in the Temple, all of the customs which now prevail among the people; for in most solemn truth I tell you that unless a man is born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus started from his chair and looked in amazement at Jesus. He had never heard anything like this in all his life. Surely, Jesus had not spoken seriously. What could he possibly mean? Instantly there flashed upon him hints and suggestions, made in the Council, respecting the sanity of the Nazarene. But

Jesus stood there calm, collected, with no sign of undue excitement other than intense interest. And that interest was felt rather than seen, and even Nicodemus, amazed as he was, could only admire the serene bearing and quiet dignity of the One who had so startled him.

Forgetful for the moment of his surroundings, Nicodemus asked in a tone almost vehement: "How can a man be born when he is old? It is impossible! Such a thing has not happened since the world began. Children are born, not men. Men grow old and die; never can they be born again."

There was no mistaking both the earnestness and disappointment in the voice of Nicodemus. There was also a strain of disapproval. He had come here with the hope of a serious, rational conversation, trusting to form such impressions and reach such conclusions as would enable him to enlighten his fellow members of the Council; and now he is told that councils and temples and ordinances are practically valueless, and that a man must be born again before he can even see the kingdom of God. To be frank, Nicodemus was on the verge of anger.

Again Jesus looked at Nicodemus, and this time perhaps more intently than before. For a little while the room was strangely still.

Mary sat where she could see the faces of the two men, the one almost pale with excitement, the other calm and confident. At length Jesus spoke, repeating substantially what he had already said, then adding a few words to make it even more impressive.

"How can these things be?" Nicodemus asked, still more puzzled and bewildered.

"You, Nicodemus, are talking about the birth of the body; I am talking about the birth of the soul, and again I tell you, in most solemn truth, that unless the soul is born anew, born of the spirit, born from above, that soul cannot enter the kingdom of God. Nearly everything in your form of religion, Nicodemus, relates only to the body. You wash your hands before sitting down to meat, but does that washing affect your heart? You stand praying on the street corners, but that is only to be seen of men. You wash the outside of the cup and platter when it is the inside you should care for. You are like the whited sepulchers which we see—pleasant to the eye, but inwardly full of corruption. When you present your offerings at the Temple you make certain the Levite is there to sound the trumpet. And all the while, Nicodemus, the soul has never so much as seen the kingdom of God."

Jesus paused, not, however, for lack of speech, for the people had said, after hearing him, "Never man spake like this man," but he saw that Nicodemus was profoundly affected and distressed as well. As a Pharisee, a member of the Council, he realized that the charges made by Jesus were fearfully true. Religion had become a matter of mere form. It had no reality, no spirit, no divine life. It had no vital relation to the soul. He had felt this in himself. But to have all these things brought home to him so fearlessly by this young Nazarene was a humiliation not at all pleasant.

"Nicodemus," said Jesus, now speaking very tenderly, "you are not to blame for these things. It is because the real nature of religion has not been understood. That which is flesh is flesh; that which is spirit is spirit; they are entirely distinct from each other. In my very first sermon I said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' But how can we have a pure heart unless we are born again? There isn't any other way. You may not know the human heart as I do, for up there in Nazareth, under the grace of God's Holy Spirit, I saw what was in the natural heart—evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies;

and now let me ask you are these things to be removed by the washing of hands, the wearing of special garments, or by making offerings at the Temple gate?"

Then there was another pause, each person in the room quietly thinking, for all felt the deep solemnity of the hour. Jesus moved gently to the door, that he might better see the glory of the night. And the silence outdoors was akin to the silence in the house. The birds were sleeping in their nests. Not a leaf was stirring on the trees. There wasn't breath enough to flicker the moonbeams falling from a cloudless sky. Nicodemus also moved to the door, for he also felt the spell of the night.

Then a light wind began to blow, growing stronger with each moment, until the trees, the flowers, even the grass, were stirred into life, when Jesus turned to Nicodemus and said: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

This time the face of Nicodemus showed his deep perplexity. He couldn't understand what Jesus meant. He knew that the prophet

Ezekiel had a vision of a valley of dry bones, a vast army of skeleton forms from which all life had departed, and that into this valley a mysterious wind had come, a divine breath, which caused these bones to waken into life and transform each skeleton into a living man, standing erect and ready for service. But, surely, that prophecy had no relation to the things of which Jesus had spoken.

There was something of a smile on the face of Jesus when he said, "Art thou a master of Israel, Nicodemus, and knowest not these things? You remember the serpent in the wilderness, when the people because of their sin and ingratitude were bitten by fiery serpents and poisoned so that many of them died, and Moses was commanded to make a serpent of brass, set it on a pole, and anyone that was bitten, no matter how badly, had only to look on that brazen serpent and immediately the poison would leave him. Now, you know, Nicodemus, there was no virtue whatever in that serpent of brass. In itself it could do nothing to relieve the poison. But their looking at that serpent meant that they repented of their sin, that their sin was leading them to death, that they must have help from God, else they would perish. It was not the serpent that saved them; it was their faith in God."

Jesus here looked questioningly at Nicodemus, who had listened intently to every word.

"Of course there was no healing power in the serpent," Nicodemus answered; "it was only a symbol of the grace and mercy of God."

"Yes"—and here Jesus spoke with strange impressiveness—"but it had a far larger meaning than many have given to it. That serpent, Nicodemus, was not only a symbol of God's power to heal and save in the wilderness; it was a type of something greater yet to come, for as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"You mean then that the poison caused by the bite of the serpent represents the corrupt heart of which you spoke a moment ago, a poison which cannot be removed by human means, and can only be taken away by God?" A note of anxiety was manifest in the voice of Nicodemus as he asked this question.

"That is just what I mean," Jesus replied. "There is no human agency that can change the naturally evil heart. David said that he was shapen in iniquity; Job asked, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' Isaiah spoke of men, referring to the heart, as being

full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; and Ezekiel compares the heart to a stone—dead, cold, bloodless. Nicodemus, your ceremonies and washings and ordinances are just like that serpent in the wilderness; they are only symbols, and unless through them you reach the grace and spirit of God, they are of no value whatever. The prophet, you remember, said, 'This people draw near me with their mouth, they honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.' "

Being a ruler in Israel, Nicodemus was familiar with the prophets, and it amazed him to hear Jesus quote from the Scriptures with such ease and accuracy. How did he acquire a knowledge of Hebrew, for that was not his native tongue? And he seemed to have a perfect understanding of what the prophets meant. Leaning forward in his chair, resting both hands on his staff, Nicodemus looked at Jesus with strange intentness. To think that a young Nazarene could have such vision, speak so confidently, yet without the least pride or self-assertion, surprised him beyond measure.

"I said that a man to enter the kingdom of God must be born again—born of water and of the Spirit"—Jesus now spoke with deep feeling—"and that will remind you, Nicodemus, of the prophecy, 'In that day there shall be a

fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.' That day has come, for God has sent his Son."

"His Son!" Nicodemus exclaimed.

"Yes, his Son, his only-begotten Son, the Son in whom he is well pleased."

Here there flashed into the mind of Nicodemus the incident of the Voice from heaven, when Jesus was being baptized in the Jordan.

"And the coming of that Son is not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. O when will the world come to know anything of the infinite love of God? This is the condemnation, Nicodemus, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light; but, remember, to as many as receive him, God's Son, to them is given power also to become the sons of God, for they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. So before one can enter, or even see, the kingdom of God he must be born again."

At this moment Martha entered the room, not in her usual noisy, bustling way, but quietly sitting down beside Mary, who had listened eagerly to the entire conversation.

Then Lazarus came in, also very quietly,

taking a seat near to that of Nicodemus. A sacred hush seemed to fall on the little company which Jesus, after a whispered word to Nicodemus, broke by saying: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father. I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast revealed these things unto us."

For a moment there was silence, when Nicodemus said, "God be merciful unto us and bless us and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

CHRIST AND BARTIMÆUS

SOMETHING evidently had gone wrong with Zebedee—and he showed it on his face, in his manner, by his speech.

"John," he said, gruffly, "that catch of fish last night was very small. And it was a good night for fishing. We should have had at least enough to pay us for our going out. And nearly all we got was of the large, unclean kind, which bring almost nothing in the market. We didn't do half as well as Peter. And usually we do far better."

"The trouble was with the nets," John answered, in a clearer, stronger voice than his father's. John's voice was so powerful, also that of his brother James, that in after days they were called Boanerges—"sons of thunder."

"The nets were broken in two or three places," James said, as he came up from the cottage close by with some stout twine in his hand. James was a big, husky fellow, tanned and weather-beaten, as fishermen usually are.

"You should have seen to the nets before we went out. It is a shame to waste a whole night in such fashion. But I have noticed

ever since you went to hear that strange prophet, John, the son of Zecharias, you think more about him and what he says than about your home or your work. And I don't believe he is a real prophet. Why doesn't he divide the Jordan as Moses did the Red Sea? Why doesn't he bring down fire from heaven as Elijah did at Mount Carmel? From all I hear he just cries, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' I call such talk foolishness. It is dangerous. And one of these days Herod will stop John from preaching, perhaps send him to prison. I am surprised he has allowed him to go on so long."

It was manifest from the way Zebedee spoke that the work of John the Baptist had not deeply impressed him. But in this he was not alone; there was much division of opinion regarding the prophet of the wilderness.

Gathering up such things as they needed for their work, James and John walked over to the beach, where the nets were drying in the sun. Soon their rough but nimble fingers were busy tying, mending, lacing, and getting the nets in readiness for the coming night. At times John would raise his eyes and look across the lake on which the sunlight fairly reveled, for the waters of this Galilæan sea were both blue and clear, but always rippling because of the turbu-

lent Jordan, which seemed to rush in, more like a torrent than a river. From where he sat he could see nearly all of the cities which bordered the lake, some of them sloping down almost to the water's edge. Though for the time a rough fisherman, John had the eye and mind of a poet; he never wearied, therefore, of the glory and beauty of this sea; it appealed strangely to him, whether bathed in moonlight or glistening in the sun.

Looking in the direction of Capernaum, he saw a young Man walking slowly along the beach. Though too far off for his features to be distinctly visible, there was something familiar about his bearing and general appearance. As he came nearer they both recognized him as the One they had seen baptized in Jordan, concerning whom John had spoken so strangely. Evidently, he desired to speak with them, for he stopped at the landing to which their boat was made fast, when they at once came ashore.

"I saw you at the baptism of John," he said. "You were among his disciples. Some people may think that John is only a reed shaken by the wind, but I say, among them that are born of woman there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. You saw me baptized? You remember what John said the following

day? And also how he declared that the kingdom of heaven was at hand? Well, I am come to bring in that kingdom. I want you to become my disciples. You are now fishers in this sea. I have a far greater work for you. Come with me, and I will make you fishers of men. Men are drowning in deeper seas than this of Galilee; seas of unbelief, of neglect of God, and unless they are saved from these terrible seas they will be lost eternally. And they cannot be saved by any means of their own. To save them my Father has sent me. But I cannot do this work alone. I need disciples, those who will help me to save a lost, sinful world. I want you, John; I want you, James, and I want you now."

Zebedee, leaning over the ship's side, heard every word. And though the appeal, if successful, would deprive him of his sons, and leave him at the mercy of hired servants, in his heart he hoped they would go.

There was something so winning in the personality of the speaker; he was so earnest, so intense, and though Zebedee had no idea of what was really meant in the appeal, yet it moved him strangely, far beyond anything he had ever heard before. Then he asked, not, though, in his usual gruff voice, "Who are you and what do you want of my sons?"

"I am Jesus of Nazareth and I am calling your sons to discipleship."

For a few moments the brothers hesitated. Then they looked at their father, at the boat in which they had so often sailed on this same sea—more their home, perhaps, than their house in Capernaum; at the nets, now mended and lying on the ship's deck; then at Jesus, whose face showed the eagerness of his desire. Birds circled in the shining sky; boats moved swiftly across the lake, their broad sail bending under the freshening breeze; fishermen gave each other a friendly call, speaking loudly as is their wont; the hum of life could be heard from the city close at hand; and there the four men stood, each busy with his own thoughts.

At length John spoke: "Master, I will follow thee. I will be thy disciple."

Hardly had the words fallen from his lips when James said, "And I, Master, will follow thee. I also will be thy disciple."

Jesus smiled gratefully. Zebedee couldn't smile; the going away of his sons meant a great deal to him; yet, somehow, he was almost glad they had decided to go with the prophet of Nazareth. So they left their father in the ship, with the hired servants, and went with Jesus.

Being naturally forceful and quick-minded,

these brothers soon came to be recognized as earnest, devoted disciples of Jesus; they followed him closely, and entertained for him a passionate affection. Hence they always resented, angrily too, anything that seemed like a reflection on the Master. One day John returned from a special errand on which he had been sent. His eyes burned strangely; there was an unwonted flush on his face; his whole bearing betrayed deep excitement. This troubled Jesus, for John was one of his chosen friends. So he asked him about it.

With a voice like that of his fisherman days John answered: "Master, you sent me, with James, to a certain village of the Samaritans, where we were to prepare for you, and where you could rest and perhaps spend the night. Knowing that they had heard of you, and of the many wonderful things you had done, I went to the rulers of the village and asked them to make ready for your coming. And, Master, when I mentioned your name, they said they didn't want you to come near their village; that they would make no provision for your comfort, and had instructed their watchmen not to allow you within their gates! Such people, Master, should be punished. Just say the word and we will bring fire from heaven and consume them as Elias did."

John was furious, so much so that he would have had the whole village destroyed.

"John," said Jesus, speaking in a tone he rarely used, "have I been with you so long, yet you understand so little of my gospel? I didn't come to destroy men's lives; I came to save them. That is my sole purpose in this world. I am here not to bring fire from heaven, but to bring peace and blessing into the hearts of men. The spirit you now show is one of anger and sin. You should, instead, pity these Samaritans, as everyone is to be pitied who refuses to hear the voice of the Son of God. John, you know not what manner of spirit you are of. Pray that it may be taken from you. Have you forgotten that I said at the beginning, when you first came to me, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you'? At the time I said that I well knew it would be a hard task to set before men, yet no one can be my real disciple who fails to do these things. Only in this way can we be children of God, for he sendeth the rain and the sun on the just and on the unjust."

Slowly the fire ceased burning in the eyes of John; the angry flush died gradually from his face, his mouth relaxed from being set and

grim, and as he looked at Jesus and saw how he, with such dignity and grace, had received the insulting message of the Samaritans, his impetuous rage melted utterly away.

As they neared Jericho Jesus observed the disciples in what seemed an angry discussion. Hot words were passing from one to another. They were strangely excited. And it had all resulted from a visit of the wife of Zebedee, who had come to ask that her sons, James and John, might have supreme honors in the kingdom which Jesus had come to establish. She wanted one placed on the right hand, the other on the left. Being closely related to Mary, the mother of Jesus, she thought it was her right to claim for her sons the privileges which naturally belonged to them.

"You don't know what you are asking," said Jesus, looking first at the mother, then at James and John.

"O yes we do," the brothers answered in the same breath.

"Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall have to drink of in the coming days?"

"We are able," was the reply, without a moment's hesitation.

"And to have the same baptism that I shall have?"

Again the reply, "We are able."

Jesus sighed deeply. He looked at them with profound pity. To think that they had heard him speak so often of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, yet all the while their desire was for an earthly kingdom, with show, glitter, service, authority, where some would exercise lordship and dominion. And while he had been preaching humility, these two men, closer to him than almost any other, had been filled with ambitious dreams, actually desiring to be placed over their fellow disciples. Jesus was bitterly disappointed. Then calling all of the twelve he said, "Do you know what lordship in the kingdom of God really means?"

No one answered. They knew by the question that Jesus was aware of their discussion about who should be greatest. "Lordship in the kingdom of God," he went on, "means larger opportunity of service. In the world a man is esteemed by the number of servants he maintains, in the kingdom of God by the amount of service he renders. The greater the dignity the greater is the service required. There is no such thing as empty honor or mere title in real discipleship. Whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant. Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. The joy of life is in giving,

in doing, in serving, and the more we serve and the more we give, the greater is our reward."

Nothing more was said, the disciples accepting the rebuke with a deep, impressive silence.

Next day, on leaving Jericho, a great crowd followed Jesus, even beyond the city gates, some hoping to hear what he might say, but a larger number hoping to see what he might do.

"Do you believe Jesus could open the eyes of the blind?" one man in the crowd asked of another, as they drew nigh the city gate.

"No; such a thing hasn't been done since the world began."

"But they say he has done it. Over there in Bethsaida, just by the Sea of Galilee, a man was brought to him, and he took him outside the town, put his hands on him twice, told him to look up, and he was able to see clearly."

"That man wasn't really blind. If he had been, a thousand hands laid on him wouldn't have done any good."

"But they tell us of two other men, who followed him into a house, and he touched their eyes and they were cured."

"Now, if they were blind, totally blind, how could they know where he was and follow him about? I tell you again, I don't believe he or

anyone else could give sight to a really blind man."

"How about Bartimæus?"

"Well, that is another matter. We all know he is blind. I don't know for certain, but I have heard that Timæus, his father, was blind."

"I wonder if Jesus saw Bartimæus he could help him in any way. It must be an awful thing to be blind. Yet, though my business often takes me to Jerusalem, and I never pass without speaking with Bartimæus, I haven't heard one word of complaint from him. I certainly pity him, and wish something could be done for him. I can't imagine anything more dreadful than sitting by the wayside begging."

The speaker was a good friend of Bartimæus and, though far from being rich, invariably gave him something when passing by.

"You don't imagine," the other man replied, scornfully, "that Jesus would trouble himself with a poor, blind beggar. Not certainly, if he is like the priests we have in Jericho. Do you know that only last week a man was beaten and robbed on his way from Jerusalem, and he might have died only for the help a Samaritan gave him? Now, that man lay on the roadside in full sight of both a priest and a

Levite, yet they passed on; one of them went over and looked at him, but the other didn't even do that. If Jesus isn't different from these priests, Bartimæus won't get much from him."

By this time the crowd had jostled through the city gate and was pouring out unto the highway, not far from the palm tree where Bartimæus sat. With ears wonderfully keen and sensitive because of his blindness, Bartimæus realized that a great throng was coming his way, for he could hear the shuffle of many feet, together with the hum and noise inseparable from a crowd. Turning his sightless eyes to some one he felt was near, Bartimæus asked the reason for all the excitement.

"Jesus of Nazareth is on his way to Jerusalem," a man answered, the one in whose direction Bartimæus had turned his face. "He will be passing here in a few minutes. I have never seen him, but people say that he can work all kinds of miracles, though I don't believe everything I hear. I certainly would like to see him work a miracle," and unconsciously the speaker looked at Bartimæus.

"Jesus, did you say? Jesus of Nazareth?" Bartimæus asked, his voice trembling with excitement. "Tell me, won't you, when he is near enough for me to call to him. I have

heard that he has opened the eyes of the blind. Perhaps if he hears my call, he may open my eyes. O, if he only would! What this would mean for me. To be no longer a blind beggar, helpless, hopeless, depending on the charity of the passers-by. In the name of God, don't let him pass without telling me!" Tears rolled down the face of Bartimæus as he spoke.

"He is now at the bend of the road," the stranger said in kindly tones, for the appeal of Bartimæus had moved him deeply. "He will be here shortly, but there is a big, noisy crowd with him. I am afraid he won't hear you."

"I don't care about the crowd. I will make him hear me. Only give me word when he is near."

After a brief pause the stranger said: "You may call now. He is close at hand."

Then in a loud, piercing voice, which could be plainly heard above the tumult and noise, Bartimæus cried, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!"

Such a cry, so intense, so appealing, might well have touched and found response in every heart in that great throng. But crowds are often merciless. They are swayed by their own passions. It was so here. To them the cry of Bartimæus seemed an intrusion. What

right had he to break in upon the procession with such a wild, frenzied scream? Surely, he could not expect that Jesus would pay any heed to the ravings of a blind beggar. So in harsh, angry voices, they shouted at him to keep quiet, to cease his noise, to hold his peace. But Bartimæus would not hold his peace. He was desperate. He cared nothing about their railing and shouting. All he wanted was that Jesus should hear him, so again and again he raised the agonizing cry, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

In vain the crowd scowled and raged, yelling at him to hold his peace. He only cried the more earnestly until he fairly shrieked, "Jesus, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

There was something so piteous, so full of entreaty in the cry that when Jesus heard it he at once stood still, apparently wondering what it could mean. Hearing it again, even more intense than before, and knowing now whence it came, he commanded that Bartimæus be brought to him.

Then, as if to show how fickle is the mind of a crowd and how easily it can veer from one extreme to another, the same men who a moment before had been railing at Bartimæus, now vied with each other as to who would reach

him first to tell him that Jesus had called him and was waiting for him.

A strange, glad light broke upon the face of the blind man. A wonderful hope began to fill his heart. Else why had Jesus sent for him? "Be of good comfort," the men had said; "he calleth thee." So, casting aside the loose cloak he usually wore, lest it might hinder him in passing through the crowd, Bartimæus was led to where Jesus stood. Then a deep silence fell upon the throng. Men glanced for an instant at each other, a glance both of wonder and dread, then at Jesus and Bartimæus. And what a contrast they presented! Bartimæus, bare almost to the waist, matted hair, unsandaled feet, unkempt, his appearance in every way that of a poor, blind beggar inured to deprivation and neglect. Jesus, young, strong, pure of body and of soul, eyes filled with divine light, face illumined as from a hidden sky, his bearing that of serenity and grace.

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" he asked Bartimæus, who stood trembling with hope and excitement.

"Lord, that I might receive my sight." Everything of faith, of desire, of yearning, of prayer; all the intensity and longing of which a human soul is capable could be felt in the

reply of Bartimæus. And this Jesus knew. He saw the quivering lip, the trembling hand, the entreating face, the sightless but tearful eyes.

Then, speaking so that all in the crowd might hear, he said, "Go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

For a moment Bartimæus stood as one stricken. A feeling of amazement came upon him. He looked around as in a dream. He was no longer blind! He saw light streaming from the sky. He saw the trees by the road-side. Fearfully he turned his eyes upon the crowd, seeing a look of wonder on each face. It was not then a dream from which he would wake into despair. It was real! His eyes had been opened! His prayer had been answered! Then, in a voice which those who heard could never forget, he cried, "O God, O God!" and in another instant flung himself at the feet of Jesus, covering them with kisses and tears.

"Master," said John that same evening as they sat watching the light fade from the sky, "when you gave sight to a blind man, or opened the ears of one who was deaf, like that man in Decapolis, you sighed as though in sorrow. Yet I know that to give eyesight to the blind or healing to the sick is a joy to you."

With a grave, troubled look on his face, and

with a tone of peculiar sadness in his voice, Jesus replied: "It is because men are concerned only with their body, not their soul. To have the body healed men will go anywhere, travel any distance, pay any price. But how few ever so much as think about the healing of the soul! Yet it is only through the soul the body has any value. Without the soul the body is dead."

Just then Peter and James came in from Bethphage, where they had been sent to arrange for keeping the Passover, which was close at hand. Jesus was wont to speak more freely with these three disciples than when all of the twelve were present.

"I have been with you for nearly three years," he said. "During that time hundreds and hundreds have come to me for help, but always for their bodies, never for their souls; all of them thinking about the life that now is, none of them thinking about the life to come."

"How about Nicodemus?" John asked, not, however, by way of denial, but to learn the result of his interview with Jesus.

"He merely came to find if I were the Messiah. He never openly became a disciple."

"There was that young man who came asking about eternal life," Peter said, the same purpose in his mind as in that of John.

"His possessions were more to him than eternal life. He went away sorrowful, and never returned. You remember my telling of the man who prepared a great supper and sent out his servants to bid those who were called. That was actual life. And that is the life we see all about us. Any excuse, no matter how trivial, is deemed sufficient. And you also remember my speaking of a farmer who was troubled about room for his crops and was going to build larger barns, but who died that same night."

The light had almost gone from the sky, but enough remained for these chosen ones to see a look of profound sadness on the face of Jesus. Usually he was calm, peaceful, with an expression suggesting mysterious strength, supreme courage. But now he seemed a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Yet no tear glistened in his eyes, for his was a burden too deep for tears. But there was nothing of weakness. The face might be sad, but it was strong, divinely, gloriously strong. Laying his hand affectionately on the shoulder of John, who sat nearer to him than the others, he said, "Bartimæus has his eyes opened to-day, the eyes of his body, and you remember the joy that came upon him when he saw the light. But a far deeper joy comes to the man when

the eyes of his soul are opened; for then he sees God as his gracious, loving Father; he sees the world, and all things in it, under the care of his Father's hand; he sees that even life itself is enriched and made beautiful by the grace and blessing of God. But O how many turn away from the touch of a Divine Hand and will not allow the eyes of their soul to be opened! So they walk in darkness, and great is that darkness! Yet it is to open their blind eyes that I have come; but men love darkness rather than light. So they will not seek the kingdom of God. They would rather grope their way blindly through life, never once having the eyes of the soul opened, living only for the things of this world, yet what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Hereafter I will not talk much with you. Arise, let us go hence."

CHRIST AND SIMON

HE was not an old man, though he would give that impression, for his face was heavily lined, his eyes had lost much of their brilliance, and he seemed to sag in his chair like one well on in years. At times he would sigh, not that deep sigh of weariness often the result of bodily fatigue, but as if some inward sorrow were trying to express itself. When he spoke one could easily detect in his voice that peculiar quality which would suggest hidden tears. Yet, strange as it may seem, one would not gather from his appearance or bearing that he was a man upon whom the years had thrown themselves, as waves over a storm-driven ship, stripping it of almost everything by which it might be able to complete the voyage. No, at heart he was a strong man, he was possessed of a proud spirit, and in his day he had faced and conquered many things from which other men had drawn back. But when his daughter, bright-eyed, sweet-faced, graceful as a fawn, one of the fairest and most attractive maidens in Magdala, was enticed by honeyed words and alluring promises to forsake her father's home, Caleb Jair,

one of whose ancestors had been a judge in Israel, suffered a blow from which recovery was impossible. His wife, a woman of rare sweetness and beauty as well, had no desire to live once her daughter had gone, for she was an only child, and upon her the mother had lavished all that was in her heart.

As Caleb sat by the window in the gathering shadows of the night, looking wistfully at the sky, to which the stars were beginning to come, his thoughts went back to the bedside of his dying wife.

"Don't blame me for going, Caleb," she said in a tender, broken voice. "I would like to stay with you, but"—she stopped abruptly and looked at Caleb as though he would understand.

Then, taking his hand in hers, holding it with what seemed renewed strength, and speaking so that every word was tense and clear, she said: "Promise me, Caleb, that when Miriam comes back, you will make her welcome, and in my name as well as yours. Be both father and mother to her. Remember what she has been to me, what she has been to you." Again she stopped, her eyes meanwhile looking into those of Caleb, as though she would read his secret heart.

"And, remember," she went on, after a

short pause, "Miriam never meant any wrong. She was deceived, wickedly, cruelly deceived. But we all were. Who would have thought that Demas"—this time the pause was broken by a faint sob, then she added, as only a dying mother could, "O Miriam, my daughter, how willingly I would have died to save thee!" No wonder Caleb's face was sad as he recalled that scene of three years before, and it was all the more sad, because Miriam had not returned to find peace and shelter in her father's home.

By this time it was late in the evening; the stars were hanging low, and shining as they only can in a Syrian sky; a gentle wind gathered the rich perfume from the garden, where Caleb tenderly cherished the flowers, once so dear to his wife, and in which Miriam had spent many of her girlhood hours. Hearing footsteps, he glanced quickly down the path leading from his house to the street, and though it was dark he instantly recognized two men—dear and intimate friends—Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus of Jerusalem.

"It is late," said Nicodemus, "but I could not go back to Jerusalem without stopping to see you, but especially to ask if you have heard of a young Man from Nazareth, supposed to be the son of a carpenter, who is saying and doing the strangest things?"

"No prophet of Israel ever spake like this Man," Joseph said, before Caleb could reply. "I happened to be in Nazareth one Sabbath day when he spoke in the synagogue. He declared that the spirit of the Lord was upon him, anointing him to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, and set at liberty them that are bruised. I did wish you could have been with me that day, Caleb, and I have thought, many times since, of what he said and the comfort his words would have given you."

"It would take more than the words of this Nazarene you speak of to heal my broken heart, or help my bruised and broken soul," Caleb sadly answered.

"I heard him not long ago," Nicodemus said, as if in reply to Caleb. "It was in the open air and he was surrounded by a crowd such as I have rarely seen. And the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. I don't think it would be possible for me to forget the closing words of that sermon. They have been with me ever since: 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' "

The moon now coming up cast some of its light on the veranda where the three men were sitting, and when Caleb looked at Nicodemus he could not fail to note his tender yet solemn expression.

Perhaps Caleb would have understood that expression had he known that Nicodemus had seen Miriam in that great crowd; that unseen by him she had listened with intense eagerness to what the Nazarene was saying, and that when the Speaker ended his discourse she hurried away, trying at the same time to hide the tears, which almost blinded her.

It was close upon midnight when the three friends parted, but Caleb had no desire for sleep. The strange words of Joseph and Nicodemus seemed to have entered his soul.

"Heal the broken-hearted," he kept repeating. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Taking the lamp one of the servants had ready for him, he went to his room, but not until he had gone to the chamber once occupied by Miriam, and kneeling at the side of the empty couch he cried, in the language of her dying mother, "O Miriam, my daughter, how willingly would I have died to save thee!"

The distance between Magdala, where Caleb

lived, and Jerusalem, where Simon lived, could be measured by miles, but the distance between Caleb and Simon was immeasurable. They were separated by habits of life, of thought, of purpose, of character, and to these no form of measurement is possible. Simon was not an openly wicked man; he was a bad man at heart, and therefore more to be feared than a flagrant, defiant sinner. We find him holding a secret council with a group of Pharisees, members of his own order.

"Yes," he said, speaking cautiously, lest some of the servants might hear, "the Nazarene is coming. He will be here to-morrow. I am going to have some kind of a feast in the courtyard, which will enable us to carry out our plan and not excite suspicion." There was a cruel glitter in his eyes, and a crafty look on his face as he spoke.

"I saw the Master, as his disciples call him, at the lake of Gennesaret some time ago, and the people there were all excited about a wonderful haul of fish, such as they had never seen before. They said he told them just where to let down the nets. If we don't do something soon, he will destroy the whole country." It was Nathan, a money-changer at the Temple, who spoke scornfully and with suppressed passion.

"Only think of that centurion in Capernaum saying that he healed his servant instantly, who was lying at the point of death. Next thing Pilate will be sending for him to come to the palace and work a miracle there," and Gershon, a Levite, laughed satirically when speaking.

A priest of the Caiaphas type, one who was trained in his school, almost daily under his influence, so far had been a silent but eager listener. That he was in full sympathy with the purpose of the council was very evident. He showed it in his face, in his smile of approval, in the emphatic, assenting motion of his head. But he felt that even more should be said.

"I heard Caiaphas say," he broke in, speaking so loudly that Simon held up a warning hand, "that unless something is done to get rid of the Nazarene, the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation. Already Cæsar has sent warning to the governor. Look at the crowds who gather to hear him. Think of what the people are saying about him. They actually believe he is the Messiah. And just see how he neglects the traditions of our fathers. He cares nothing for either scribe or rabbi. Then he goes everywhere, making friends with publicans and sinners, eating with them, drinking with them,

and all the while teaching and preaching the strangest things. One day, standing in the crowd, close enough to catch every word, I heard him put himself above all law and tradition and commandment. Every little while he kept repeating, 'But I say unto you,' as if Moses and all the prophets must give way to him. I hope Simon has found a way by which we can expose this deceiver. As Pharisees our duty in this matter is plain. Our only hope is in some way to destroy him."

To this outburst all gave eager consent, so loudly that again Simon had to raise a warning hand.

"Have you arranged with Miriam?" Nathan, the money-changer, was asked.

"Yes, I saw her early to-day. I had some difficulty in persuading her to come. But finally she consented. She would not take any money. Some one told me she had been seen in the crowd listening to the Nazarene."

"You didn't tell her that he would be here to-morrow?" Simon asked, anxiously.

"Never mentioned his name. Made her think she was an invited guest. Suggested that there was a stranger you desired to honor, and for her to bring a box of her favorite perfume, and the most precious she had, as it might be used some time during the feast."

"Well done, Nathan! I knew we could depend on you," Simon said with a malicious chuckle, and then he added: "I think after tomorrow the Nazarene, or the Master, as his disciples call him, won't give us much more trouble."

With this the council broke up, all agreeing to meet next day at the house of Simon.

Simon, like most of the rich men of that day, was extravagant, ostentatious, and fond of display, and when he entertained a company he took care that everything was done in such form as to secure unstinted praise. The Master, therefore, had every reason to expect that when he arrived Simon would greet him as he did the other guests—give him the salutation of welcome, command a servant to bring a basin of water to refresh his feet, then have a grateful perfume for his head. To all of the others these attentions were given, and the Master could not fail to notice how suave, and gracious, and courteous Simon seemed, as he moved through the company. He motioned Nathan, the money-changer, to a place reserved for some chosen ones, also the priest who had been at the council the night before, nor did he forget the Levite.

Anyone but the Master would have felt embarrassed, perhaps aggrieved, at the studied

neglect of Simon, for such open discourtesy could not fail to attract general notice.

"Who is that young man?" one would ask another, then they would look at the Master, who stood quietly waiting to be shown his place at the table.

"Evidently, he is not of much consequence else Simon would not have treated him so lightly. Simon, you know, is careful not to offend anyone who——"

"That is true, but that is true of lots of other men. I feel sorry, though, for that young man. His face seems familiar. But I can't remember just now where I have seen him." As they were speaking a servant motioned to the Master, who followed him to a place not far from the table where Simon sat.

When all of the guests had arrived, a large company they were, for Simon had contrived to suggest that some strange thing might occur; and when the feast was at its height, a woman, richly clad and strangely beautiful, appeared at the courtyard entrance. Standing there for a few moments, she looked first at one group, then at another, apparently seeking for the Stranger of whom Nathan had spoken. Instantly the eyes of the whole company turned to where she stood; and well they might, for she was dowered with a beauty al-

most unearthly. Yet there was nothing gay or vivacious in either her face or bearing; and though her lips seemed to curve into a haughty or scornful smile, she gave the impression of trying to hide a sore, sorrowing heart.

Simon glanced quickly at Nathan, then at the priest, to which they replied with a covert smile.

With a grace which must have been an inheritance, for it never could have been acquired, she moved slowly along the courtyard, indifferent seemingly to the wondering faces which met her on every side. Seeing Nathan, her eyes flashed with anger, for she now realized that he had willfully deceived her in what he had said the day before.

When she came to the table at which the Master had been placed, she looked at him with wonder, and was so startled and amazed that she drew back, then stood as though all life had gone. Quicker than light, her thoughts flashed back to that never-to-be-forgotten day when she heard him say, in his rich, tender, appealing voice, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." And now he was here; his eyes, full of help and pity, bent on her; his face, gracious and winning, calling her to his side. True, he had not spoken, but she felt that he was speak-

ing to her and saying, just as he had said before, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Then, forgetful of everything save that he was here, she fell at his feet, the hot tears rolling down her cheeks. Sobbing as if her heart would break, she tenderly, with her unbound hair, wiped the feet upon which her tears had fallen, kissing them again and again in loving adoration. Nor was she content until she had poured on the Master's head the most costly of all her perfumes, one she had treasured as a priceless possession.

At that moment Simon was much pleased with himself. And apparently with good cause. He had succeeded even beyond his expectations. There was no question now in his mind. Nor could there be a question in the mind of anyone in that company. The Galilæan was not a prophet. He was a pretender, a deceiver, simply an impostor; otherwise he would not have allowed this woman to so much as touch him, much less bathe his feet with her tears and pour her alluring perfume on his head. No wonder Simon smiled as he looked across the table at Nathan. And well might his eyes have a gleam of triumph when he glanced at the priest. Nor did he try to conceal the pleased expression on his face with which he regarded the whole company. Mean-

time not a word was spoken. The only sound that broke the silence was the woman sobbing at the feet of the Master. The uninvited guests, those who had come in during the course of the feast, came forward from behind the pillars of the portico, and pressed their way almost to the table where the Master sat. The other guests, nearly all of whom knew this woman, at least by name, for her beauty had been spoken of everywhere, looked first at the kneeling woman, then at the Master, then at Simon, wondering why he did not have his servants remove this woman, whose presence was an affront they all resented.

Then the Master broke the silence by saying, in a tone easily audible to the entire company, "I will answer your question, Simon."

"But I didn't speak," Simon replied, with an amazed look.

"Not so that all these might hear, but I heard every word."

"Why, Master," Simon said, excitedly, "I never opened my mouth so much as to whisper."

"But you opened your heart, Simon, and when the heart is opened the truth is spoken. And this is the thought in your heart: 'If this man,' referring to me, 'were a prophet, he would know that this woman is a sinner; he

would not allow her to touch him, he would angrily have withdrawn his feet, ordered her from his presence, and spoken too with such harshness that she would have left at once, thus giving proof that he was a real prophet.' "

As the Master spoke his hand rested gently on the woman's shoulder, so gently in fact that it seemed as a caress.

Simon's face expressed the wonder he felt. And not only wonder, but bitter, angry disappointment. The scheme he had been working on with such intent and of which he was so confident, had utterly failed. It had more than failed, for it gave the Nazarene such an occasion as proved the very thing Simon was so eager to disprove, and for which he had arranged this feast and invited a large company, that they might see the pretensions of the Nazarene brought to an end.

The priest was even more astonished than Simon. Then he turned to where Nathan sat, but there was no comfort in his face, for he was frowning heavily, staring at the Master with eyes full of hatred.

"Simon," said the Master, in the clear, strong voice he often used, "seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet."

Now Simon drops his head, he is mortified.

Full well he knows that he had deliberately intended to slight his own guest, an offense which even that company would hardly condone.

The Master went on: "But she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss."

Simon now remembered with shame how he had turned away to effusively greet other guests, with only a cold, formal word for the Nazarene.

Again the Master spoke: "But this woman hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint."

Simon was now bitterly distressed, for in this neglect he had given proof of his enmity and lack of even common courtesy.

"But this woman hath anointed my feet. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little."

Then in a voice of supreme tenderness, in which they all could feel the pity and sympathy of the Master, at the same time raising her gently from her knees, and looking lovingly into her tearful, grief-stricken face, he said: "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Slowly the woman moved toward the courtyard gate, not with the same imperious bearing as when she entered, but with a quiet dignity so impressive that no curious eyes followed, and even the servants stood respectfully aside as she passed through the gate.

. . . . . .

This time Nicodemus came alone to see Caleb. He found him on the veranda, watching the stars come from their hiding places, and range themselves along the sky. And he had a special purpose in coming, for he had heard only the day before of the feast in the house of Simon, and of Miriam being there. It did not seem quite right to him that Caleb should know of this through strangers. They might not tell exactly what happened, but, instead, get things so mixed and confused as to add to the burden of Caleb's sorrow. So he told him of having seen Miriam in the crowd, listening eagerly to the Master; that she was there that day when, with an entreaty never to be forgotten, he cried, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; that as she left the throng he saw that she was weeping; and that since then she had lived quietly at home, free from her old associates and companions.

How Caleb listened! With what eagerness

he followed every word! And when Nicodemus rose to go he went with him to the gate leading to one of the chief streets of Magdala.

Returning to the veranda, he sat down and tried to recall what Nicodemus had said.

"I would like to hear the Master. I wonder if he can really heal the broken-hearted or give rest to the heavy-laden?" he whispered just above his breath.

He did not hear the soft tread of a sandaled foot coming up the path, but he did hear a voice that thrilled his very soul, and in a moment Miriam had thrown her arms around his neck and hidden her weeping face on his breast. There was no sleep for him that night. His joy was too full.

"Yes," he kept saying, "He can heal the broken-hearted, he can comfort them that are bruised. Thank God that he ever came to say, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,' rest unto your souls."

CHRIST AND LAZARUS

THOUGH Lazarus was the only son of a rich man and might have chosen an easy, luxurious life, his mind tended just the other way, much to the surprise of many of the young men with whom he was acquainted. They couldn't understand why he should plod every day from Bethany to Jerusalem, trudge along that dusty road under the hot sun, sometimes in the blinding rain, then work hard in his father's warehouse for several hours, often weary and exhausted when he returned home.

"What a fool Lazarus is!" one would say to the other. "He works like a hired servant. No need of it. His father, Levi, is the richest man in Bethany."

"I wish he had been with us last night," the other answered, "and taken a few throws with the dice. He might have changed my luck. I tell you, Benjamin, I dropped some shekels in that game with Judah and Reuben."

"It was too much wine, Marcus; you not only looked upon the wine when it was red, but you swallowed it in flagons. Then you lost your head and made the most foolish bets. When one plays with such men as Reuben and

Judah better not have any wine of any color, either white or red."

"Then you think that——"

"No, I don't! Not for a minute. But if it hadn't been for the wine you would not have gambled in such a reckless fashion."

Just at that moment Lazarus crossed the street on his way home. There was a sharp contrast both in bearing and appearance between him and the two roysterers who had spoken to each other so frankly. They looked exactly what they were—careless, idle, extravagant—and represented many others of the same class and type. Lazarus in no way suggested the rich man's son, with a life of boundless, reckless pleasure. His face had a serious look; there was nothing jaunty in his walk. Indeed, he seemed anxious, as if troubled in some way. Though he had met Marcus and Benjamin several times—for they both lived in Bethany—they were not in his circle of friends. So he merely acknowledged their salutation and passed on. When he arrived at home Martha gave him a keen, searching look, for he impressed her as being more tired than usual, and in her direct way asked him if he was sick.

"No, but I have had rather a hard day. Things haven't gone just right. My head has

troubled me a little." Then smiling gently, he added, "I don't feel quite myself—if you know what that means."

For Lazarus to be sick was a new experience in that home. Though not of the rugged or stalwart type, he was vigorous to a degree often surprising, and able to relieve his father of most of his business burdens. At the evening meal Martha observed that he hardly even looked at the dishes the servants brought to him, and seemed relieved when the supper was over. On the balcony, where the family usually gathered for a social hour, talking pleasantly over the day's happenings, he was listless, taking little part in the conversation, only answering when spoken to, and in a voice very unlike the one to which they were accustomed. Mary drew her chair over to the one Lazarus occupied and gently placed her hand on his, then softly smoothed his brow, soon detecting the fever that was burning in his blood. In a flash her eyes found those of Martha and soon the servants were called and Lazarus was taken to his room. When the morning came he was no better. Despite the care and devotion of these loving sisters the fever steadily gained, and though every possible remedy was applied nothing seemed to avail.

"O where is the Master?" Mary cried; "why

haven't we sent for him? He loves Lazarus. He will surely come when he hears that he is sick. All we have to do is send a messenger. We needn't even ask him to come. Martha, call one of the servants. Tell him to hurry over to Perea, where the Master is now with his disciples. While the servant is getting ready I will prepare the message for him."

It was a short message. There was no appeal. No urgent call for help. No entreaty for the Master's presence. Just a few words, but so suggestive, so significant, so confident: "Master, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

Leaving the sick chamber for a few moments, the sisters stood on the balcony, watching the servant as he hurried away, their eyes following him until he reached a bend in the road and passed out of sight.

Now, their anxiety seemed to disappear. A glad light came upon each face. Mary, always sweet and gentle, was even more so, as she took her place beside the couch on which Lazarus lay. Martha, for the first time that day, so far relaxed as to smile at a remark of a servant, and a spirit of cheer was diffused all through the household.

"The Master is coming," one would say to the other with brightening face and shining

eyes; and when the neighbors called to inquire about Lazarus they were answered with a confidence which could not be mistaken.

Through that day and night the sisters watched by the couch of Lazarus, speaking to him in gentle, endearing tones, telling him they had sent for the Master, and that he would surely come on the morrow. But on the morrow, when the messenger returned, to their amazement the Master was not with him.

"What did he say when you gave him our message?" Martha asked, in a voice which expressed both sorrow and surprise.

"He said, 'This sickness is not unto death.' "

"Not unto death!" Mary sobbed; "our brother is dying now. Unless the Master comes at once nothing can save him. Was that all he said?"

"No, for after saying that this sickness is not unto death, he added, 'but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.' "

"But why didn't he come?" Martha asked, vehemently, tears meanwhile streaming down her cheeks. "Surely, he won't stay away and let Lazarus die. And I don't see how the death of our brother can add to the glory of God. I can't understand why the Master didn't come when he knows we are in such

trouble. I was certain he would be here long before now. And all we get is this message. Not a word of comfort. Not a promise of help. It is so unlike him. I can't possibly see why he should fail us now."

Mary didn't speak. She was so distressed at the response of the Master, so amazed at his seeming indifference, that speech was impossible. And her sorrow was not only because of Lazarus, but because of her deep disappointment in the Master's neglect of those whom he professed to love.

Everything that skill could suggest, or love provide, was done for Lazarus. A sleepless, tireless vigil was kept by the devoted sisters. But they did not give up hope. Though with each passing hour they could see that the end was not far off, somehow the strange words of the Master came to them again: "This sickness is not unto death." What could they mean? And in the night, when everything was still save a moan or weak, pitiful cry from the dying man, Mary would listen with straining heart for the sound of the Master's footfall, or perhaps hear his voice speaking in tones of comfort and cheer. Martha, not content to listen, would open the window or go down the road, and more than once, in the bright moonlight, she was certain that yonder in the dis-

tance, he was hastening to their home. But though Mary sat, her soul trembling with desire and hope; and Martha would strain her eyes, now weary with watching, no Master appeared, no sound of his voice broke the stillness of the night.

"Has the Master come?" Lazarus feebly whispered, close upon daybreak, looking at the anxious, tear-stained faces of his sisters, who were bending over his couch.

"No," answered Mary, in a voice hardly audible.

"Strange; I thought he would come when he knew I was sick."

Lazarus could just speak, taking a breath after each word. Then he moved slightly on the couch, closed his eyes, and fell into the sleep that we call death.

Over in Perea, beyond Jordan, the disciples were discussing the strange words of the Master concerning Lazarus; also his purpose to return at once to Judæa.

"They threatened to stone him," Andrew said, with an indignation that was very manifest.

"But Lazarus is sick," Matthew responded. "The Master is needed in Bethany, and he will surely go there no matter what the Judæans may say or do."

"But he said this sickness was not unto

death. Why must we risk being stoned when there is no need of it? He also said our friend Lazarus sleepeth, which is a good sign and means that he is getting better."

It was Judas who spoke, and there was a good degree of impatience, almost anger, in his voice.

So far Thomas had taken no part in the discussion. He rarely did. This time, however, he broke in by saying: "Are we afraid to go with the Master? Are we to leave him to face the Judæans alone? We are not worthy to be called his disciples if we desert him now. We can at least die with him."

There was no question as to the sincerity of Thomas. It was evident in the flashing of his eyes, the stern expression of his face, the clear, ringing voice with which he spoke, also the indignant, reproachful look he gave Judas. The other disciples were surprised at the earnestness of Thomas. He was usually so cautious in his speech, in every way far more restrained than the others. And the fact that he was wont to be silent made his words all the more impressive.

The face of Judas was the only one in the group which did not light up under this appeal of Thomas. All of the others gave an immediate response. But Judas maintained his

sullen, dogged expression even after the disciples, with the Master in their midst, had started on the way to Bethany.

In some way tidings were brought to the stricken home that the Master had left Perea and was coming to Bethany. When Martha heard that he was so close at hand she instantly left the room where the mourners had gathered and with eager, impatient heart went out to meet him.

"O, why didn't he come before?" she kept asking herself, as she hastened along the road, the tears so blinding her that she would stumble at times. But she pressed on, meeting the Master and his disciples before they entered the village.

Without pausing to realize the full meaning of her words, or the reproach they implied, and not even asking why he had not come before, Martha abruptly said,

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

With infinite tenderness the Master replied, "Martha, thy brother shall rise again."

"Yes, I know, he shall rise again in the resurrection, in the last day. All the dead shall be raised then. But I believe that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

Martha looked earnestly into the face of the Master as she spoke. She seemed possessed with a vague hope that it was not yet too late for some strange thing to be done. For a few moments the Master made no reply. Nor did any of the disciples speak; tears, though, glistened in their eyes, as they heard the tender, pleading voice of Martha.

Then with an amazement, which they did not attempt to conceal, they heard the Master say, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live."

Never were such words spoken before. The disciples looked first at the Master, then at Martha, then at each other. Could the Master have meant what he said? Perhaps it was not his intent that these words should be taken literally. But as though he would make doubt impossible, in the same thrilling voice they heard him say, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Turning to Martha, whose eyes had never left the Master's face, and into whose heart each word had a divine meaning, he asked,

"Believest thou this?"

"Yes, Master, I do," was the immediate response.

"Then call Mary; I wish to speak with her."

When Martha returned to her home in Bethany she found Mary surrounded by friends, who had come with messages and words of comfort.

"The Master has come and calleth for thee," she whispered to Mary.

"The Master?" said Mary, a look of wonder on her face.

"Yes, he is just outside the village, not far from the grave of our brother."

Mary instantly arose and silently went out, all the mourners naturally thinking she had gone with Martha to the place of burial that they might weep together. But it was not to the grave they went, for in the distance Mary saw the Master and soon she was at his feet, saying, just as Martha had said, with perhaps a deeper sorrow,

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Then ensued a silence broken only by the sobs of these loving women. But in his spirit the Master was troubled. His was a grief too deep for voice or speech. No sob or sound came from him. His tears, however, could not be restrained. Silently they rolled down his face, each tear a witness of the intense feeling in his soul.

Yet even at such an hour and in such a

place there were those who jeered and mocked! Some rulers of the synagogue were there. And not to express sympathy with the bereaved home, for they only smiled in derision when they saw the tears of the Master.

"This is the man who claims to be a miracle-worker! Only last week he pretended to open a blind man's eyes," one ruler whispered to another, loud enough for the Master to hear.

"He was careful to remain in Perea until Lazarus died, else he might have been expected to cure him. Now he comes when it is impossible to do anything. They sent for him nearly a week ago, but he was too wise to come then," another ruler whispered back, also loud enough for the Master to hear.

Then another of the rulers, even more bitter and malignant, said, "He can't deceive the people here as he did those in the house of Jairus. I have talked with Jairus, and am convinced the child was in a trance. And the same is true of the widow's son in the village of Nain. Of one thing we are sure, Lazarus is dead. No chance for this deceiver, therefore, to work one of his pretended miracles here." And the speaker, who had come from Jerusalem, ostensibly as a mourner, but actually as a spy, almost gloated because of his certainty that Lazarus was really dead.

Seemingly unmoved by what was being said, the Master proceeded calmly to the sepulcher, which was a cave, cut in a rock, protected by a huge stone. The company, consisting of the disciples, Mary and Martha, some of the rulers and mourners, and a few others to whom burials and burial places have a peculiar attraction, formed a semicircle facing the tomb.

The Master, in a commanding voice, said, "Take ye away the stone."

"O Master," said Martha, in tones of earnest entreaty, "my brother has been dead four days. Corruption has already set in. His features will have changed. We would rather not see him as he is now. He has not yet been embalmed. Do not, I beseech thee, have the stone taken away."

With tender, pitying eyes, the Master looked at Martha, then at Mary, whose face silently voiced her sister's appeal; but at a sign, which the disciples understood, the stone was removed and the body of Lazarus lay before them all—dead, unquestionably dead. It was surely a strange scene. Death in the presence of life, life awed and hushed in the presence of death.

Then the Master prayed, and a wondrous prayer it was, its first word being one of thanks, its last word for the people assembled at that

tomb. Closer the little company gathered about the grave. Every eye rested intently on the body of the dead Lazarus, and all wondering what the Master was about to say or do. It was not, surely, that he might take a last look at the face of his friend that he had caused the stone to be removed. Some other purpose was in his mind. Besides, he had said they would see the glory of God. What could he mean by such words as these? An oppressive silence fell upon everyone.

With a swift glance into the silent tomb, then at the Master, they all waited in silence. Though the faces of the rulers maintained their expression of doubt and suspicion, they also had a look of wonder and dread as well. Martha stood close to the grave, with one arm supporting Mary, who trembled as if frightened. After removing the stone, the disciples who had rendered that service drew back and joined the others, without so much as a whisper passing between them. Overhead was a cloudless sky of deepest blue. The birds in the trees close by were strangely silent, though it was the hour when they were wont to sing. A faint wind, just enough to temper and sweeten the air, moved gently through the place of burial.

Having finished his prayer, the Master, going

up to the mouth of the cave, called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

The thrill of that voice fell upon every heart. There was in it a quality so peculiar, so penetrating, so mysterious, that they all shuddered. Then, to their amazement, their unspeakable wonder, the white-clothed form in the cave was seen to move as though in life; before their eyes the figure sat up. It was no vision, no dream, no illusion, for now Lazarus, a living, breathing figure, stood upright, and though cumbered with graveclothes, walked to the mouth of the sepulcher.

Martha tried to speak, but could not. Mary stood spellbound. The disciples, strong men as they were, looked at the moving figure with a fascination equal almost to terror. But the Master had no fear. To him Lazarus was no apparition, no spirit from the unseen world, no spectral visitant to cause alarm or create distress; so in the same voice with which he had told them to remove the stone he said, referring to the vestments with which Lazarus was bound, "Loose him and let him go."

Peter, ever ready to obey the Master's word, at once sprang forward to undo the garments that fettered the hands and feet of Lazarus. The others eagerly assisted, and soon the fine linen was so rearranged that instead of being a

vestment for the dead it became a vesture for the living.

How different the return to Bethany from the journey of a few days before! Then they had taken Lazarus away; now he was coming back. Then the village was stricken with sorrow, for Lazarus and his sisters had friends in every home; now they were gathered in knots and groups eagerly telling each other the wonderful story of Lazarus being restored to life.

The strange tidings soon reached Jerusalem, of which Bethany was a suburb, and it was not long before chariots began to arrive crowded with people, friends, acquaintances—even strangers—all anxious to see Lazarus, to speak with him, to take him by the hand, so as to assure themselves that the things they had heard were really true. It was a day of the strangest excitement, and when night came the sisters gladly sought their chamber, for they were very weary. Just before retiring Mary said to Martha,

"Tell me again what the Master said to you this morning."

"This is what he said," Martha answered: " 'I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.' "

THE MASTER TRANSFIGURED

"NATHANAEL," said Philip, speaking with much earnestness, "you remember when John was baptizing in Jordan I told you we had found Him of whom Moses in the law and prophets did write?"

"I remember it well, and I was sure you were mistaken, for I asked, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' But when the Master said he had seen me under the fig tree before you called me, I knew then he was the Son of God, the King of Israel."

Nathanael's reply caused Philip to put another question: "Are you as certain now as you were then that he is the Messiah, the One sent of God, of whose coming Jacob prophesied so long ago? He said the scepter would not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come. And now, Nathanael, the scepter has departed from Judah; we have a Roman king; we do not make our own laws; and I have a feeling that these prophecies relate in some way to the Master."

Nathanael was not ready to answer Philip's question. He was in much perplexity of mind. In common with all devout and faithful Jews,

he had looked for the coming Messias. He had been brought up on that hope. His fathers before him had cherished the same desire. But the advent of the Messias was to be an event of such imperial splendor, as immediately to so impress itself that at once the redemption of Israel would come to pass. He looked over to where the Master was standing, clothed, as always, in the garb of a peasant; his hands bearing the marks of the toil with which he earned his bread; his bearing that of one accustomed to hardship and poverty; and he wondered, even to the point of doubt, if he really could be the Messias. So the question of Philip remained unanswered.

Turning suddenly, the Master, in that clear yet tender voice, with which he was wont to speak to the disciples, asked, "Whom do men say that I am?"

Such a question was so unlike him that the disciples looked at each other in surprise. He had never seemed to care how the people regarded him. With superb independence he had gone from one place to another, doing and saying the strangest things, and when questioned would refuse to say who he was, or by what authority he had been commissioned.

Nathanael, remembering Philip's question, and seeing a way by which his own perplexity

might be relieved, said, "Some people think you are Elijah."

In that reply Nathanael meant no disrespect, but just the contrary. No prophet was more vividly remembered, or had made such an impression on the nation as Elijah. Besides, he was associated with the promised Messias, for Malachi, the last of their great prophets, had named him as the forerunner of the long-expected King.

The Master gently smiled, then looked at Philip, who said, "Some of the people think you are Jeremiah."

As a prophet Jeremiah was held in high esteem. And there was much in his character which corresponded with that of the Master. He was gentle, tender-hearted, wonderfully loving, yet of unbending firmness, a man of iron in loyalty and endurance.

Again the Master smiled when Matthew said, "And others think you are John the Baptist, who has been raised from the dead."

Then with a look which pierced the soul of each man in that company, and in a voice none could resist, the Master asked, "But whom say ye that I am?"

Instantly Peter responded, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Never was Peter more impressive than at

this moment. He, for the time, was no rugged, coarse-handed fisherman, of heavy form, bronzed face, rough voice; he was a chosen herald, making a royal announcement; a forerunner, proclaiming the dignity and station of his King; a prophet, unfolding a divine message, one specially intrusted to him. No wonder the disciples looked at him so intently, or gave such heed to what he said. But much greater was their wonder when they saw the Master lay his hand affectionately on Peter's shoulder, his face flaming with divine light, his eyes shining with holy fire, and say:

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

A strange scene surely was this. And strange that it should be enacted here. For this was in Cæsarea Philippi, far from Nazareth, far from Jerusalem, a country almost as pagan as imperial Rome, and where Jewish life was

hardly known. From where he stood the Master could see the city, luxurious, powerful, a marvel of wealth and beauty, with its wondrous temple built by Herod in honor of Augustus; its mighty fortress crowning the hill, where bands of Roman soldiers kept constant watch. In the rocks close at hand he could read the countless inscriptions, cut so clear and deep as to outlast the ages, for Cæsarea Philippi had many gods and many altars.

Yet it was here that the Master began the building of his church, placing his disciples in its foundation; and giving them to understand that under his inspiration they were to carry forward that work, making it so massive, so mighty, that even the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

When he ceased speaking a feeling of profound awe rested on that little company. There was something so amazing in what he proposed that they were almost terror stricken. To build a church so supreme as not only to have power on earth, but power in heaven; to place in its hand the keys of the invisible, spiritual world; they, fishermen, carpenters, taxgatherers, to be chosen for such a transcendent service—even to imagine such a thing was impossible!

But there stood the Master; calm as the deep, eternal sky, into whose glory they could look, without a cloud to dim its radiance; strong, as the giant rocks upon which Cæsarea Philippi had built its fortress and its temples; confident, as the warrior who knows that the battle is already won. And as they looked at him, so self-reliant, so certain, so absolute, their eyes began to shine, great hopes came throbbing to their hearts, a spirit of daring entered their souls, and they felt, as never before, the glory of the mission to which the Master had called them.

Like all great teachers and thinkers, the Master was fond of the mountains, the sea-shore, even the wilderness. Cities trammeled him. He felt restricted. Nor was the air pure. There was too much noise. The strife of tongues wearied him. So after ministering for some days in the region of Cæsarea Philippi, he took Peter and James and John to one of the hills of Mount Hermon, the summit being nearly always covered with snow. The Master said little during the hours of this journey. He seemed unusually thoughtful. And he preferred to be alone. That soon became evident, so the three chosen ones gradually fell behind to such a distance that they could freely speak without being overheard.

"I know," Peter said, "he rebuked me at Cæsarea Philippi because when he spoke of the chief priests and scribes putting him to death, I couldn't believe it possible and hoped God would forbid such a thing. And I am of the same mind now," Peter continued defiantly, speaking, however, in a lower tone; "why should they kill him? He has broken no law either Roman or Jewish. And if he is put to death, what becomes of the church he spoke of the other day?"

"Yes," John replied, "but he said he would be raised again the third day."

"The more I see of the Master," James said, "the more I love him, yet I do not understand him. When I first became a disciple I thought he would restore again the kingdom to Israel. He seemed to have all power, could do anything he pleased, raise the dead, quell the storm on the lake, feed the multitude. You have seen him do many other things as well, and I expected long ago that he would have established openly his claim to the Messiahship."

"What do you think now?" Peter asked, in his abrupt way.

"I don't know what to think," James replied, frankly. "I love him, would die for him, will follow him to the end whatever it may be,

but his idea of the kingdom is so unlike anything I had imagined, and his teaching is so different from that of the chief priests and scribes as to create doubt and confusion in my mind."

For some time nothing was said, each man being busy with his own thoughts, though looking now and then at the sunset on the snows of Mount Hermon. John, who at heart was a mystic and in soul a poet, watched the changing colors, the crimson turning to purple, the gold deepening into red, then the shadows come creeping from the sky and descend softly to the foothills.

Meanwhile the Master had found a quiet resting place, where alone he might commune with God. Respecting his desire, the disciples remained some little distance apart, but near enough to see his face, though they could not hear his voice. Instinctively they felt he was at prayer, and a sacred hush fell upon them. The night was strangely still. Not a sound broke upon what seemed a divine repose. The sky under which they sat held not a single cloud. So intense was the silence that they were oppressed and would not even whisper to each other. At length they heard the soft, tender, pleading voice of the Master, and thinking that perhaps he was calling them, they looked, when, to their amazement, they

saw his face shine with a greater glory than the sun, which in surpassing beauty had gone down behind Mount Hermon. The radiance of that face was so brilliant as to fill them with wonder, for it spread from the Master and illumined the place where he stood. Then his garments, the coarse, common raiment he usually wore, soiled and stained with the marks of his daily toil, all at once became white as the light, a whiteness so startling that it dazzled, almost blinding them. And as though those things were not enough to bewilder them, two mysterious figures came out of the silent sky, and standing close to the Master, began speaking with him. They could hear also something of what these strange visitants said, and soon discovered that they were Moses and Elijah, who had come to talk with the Master of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. Moses, the great lawgiver, the man to whose burial only angels were summoned and whose tomb is lost in the mysteries of God; Elijah, the great reformer, whose iron hand could open gates of flame, and whose passage heavenward was in chariots of fire—these men, whose names were dear to every Jewish heart, were there before their wondering eyes, and with a glory greater than they had ever known on earth.

Trembling with excitement, thrilled as they had not deemed possible—for all three were fishermen, and familiar, therefore, with strange and exciting things—these men stood eager, intense, alert, open-eyed, their faces strained with the wonders and mysteries of the night. But even greater things were yet to come, for now a cloud, as that which stood over the tabernacle in the desert, overshadowed them, and in that cloud they feared, for they could not see the Master; Moses and Elijah were also hidden from them.

Only that they were men of superb courage they would have cried to the Master in their distress, for none but the most daring and mighty of heart could have endured such a night, but when a Voice from the cloud, in tones which once heard could never be forgotten, proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," these strong, rugged men of the sea could no longer bear the strain; a great dread came upon them, and they fell on their faces and were sore afraid.

Bending over them and gently touching them, the Master said, "Arise, and be not afraid."

Standing up, they looked around as men in a dream. The cloud had gone. Moses and Elijah had vanished, going as mysteriously as

they had come. The garments of the Master no longer glistened with a whiteness beyond anything they had ever seen. His face was quiet and strong, as always, but the strange light was not there. Perhaps it was only a dream, a wild fancy of the night, the natural result of their eagerness to prove that the Master was really the Messiah of God. But when he said, "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead," they knew it was no dream, no strange delusion of the mind, but a glorious reality, such a manifestation of the Master's relationship with the unseen world as they would remember for all time to come.

"Peter, what do you think that vision really meant to the Master, and for what purpose was it given?" This was the question of James as they were coming from the mountain. "You wanted to stay there, to have us build three tabernacles, one for the Master, one for Moses, one for Elijah, but evidently you didn't know just what you were saying."

James was able to speak in the plainest, frankest way, yet give no offense.

Peter smiled. In a dim, confused way he recalled his impulsive utterance on the mountain, and now realized how thoughtless and unmeaning was his request.

"I think," said John, who saw that Peter hesitated, "the vision was to prepare the Master for the death at the hands of the chief priests and scribes, of which he has so often spoken. At first, like Peter, I couldn't imagine such a thing, but I am afraid it is only too true. Just see how they have driven him from one place to another, and actually charge him with being in league with the devil."

"If they had heard that voice from the cloud saying, 'This is my beloved Son,' they would know how God approves of the Master," Peter said, with deep emotion.

"But why were Moses and Elijah there? I could easily understand Isaiah coming, for he is Messiah's prophet, and almost every day I can see in the Master some new fulfillment of Isaiah's words. Or David might have come, for he, though not a prophet, often prophesied much as Isaiah did. To me it seems strange that Moses and Elijah should be chosen as witnesses and also to speak to the Master of his decease in Jerusalem."

It was James who spoke.

They had now reached a soft, mossy bank which looked cool and inviting, so they sat down, the Master going on farther, anxious, seemingly, to reach the valley where the other disciples had remained.

"I also," John said, "wondered at the appearance of Moses and Elijah, but, thinking it all over, I can see good reasons for it. They were not there as prophets; so far as I can recall neither of them spoke a word of prophecy. Moses was a lawgiver, Elijah was a reformer; and they had both come to confess that the law had failed, that reform had failed, and the only possible hope for the world was in the decease which the Master should accomplish at Jerusalem. Couldn't you hear, at least, part of what Moses said? And Elijah almost repeated his cry of the wilderness when he said that the people had forsaken the covenant, slain the prophets, overthrown the altars, and in every way had forsaken God."

John's eyes were closed as he spoke. Yet from the expression on his face it would seem as if he were seeing more than the crowd in the valley, or the men who sat beside him on the little plateau.

"Yes," he went on, "law has failed. Just see how our people have gone into idolatry and sin of every form. And reform has failed, even more sadly than law. And that is why Moses and Elijah were with the Master on Mount Hermon."

There was something so startling yet so

reasonable in what John said that neither Peter nor James could make definite reply.

"I wish you could explain as readily the glorified body of the Master," said Peter, as he stood up, getting ready to resume the journey down hill, an example they quickly followed.

"It may be that the Master's own words explain that, for has he not spoken of being raised from the dead on the third day? Who knows but that glorified body which we saw is the body in which he shall come from the tomb?" John replied, as he started walking rapidly, hoping to overtake the Master.

Many years after, this vision came back to Peter, and he wrote, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty . . . when we were with him in the holy mount."

CHRIST AND THE YOUNG RULER

ELKANAH, a Pharisee of high rank, walked to and fro on the veranda of his home, a large, imposing dwelling, from which he could easily see Jerusalem, with its palaces of white marble and its wondrous Temple. But though Elkanah would pause at times and look at the city, now holding from its hillsides the glory of the setting sun, it was not of the city he was thinking, nor of the sky from which the light streamed so abundantly. It was a young Man from Nazareth who was occupying his thoughts, and not pleasantly, judging by the expression on his face. His brows were so wrinkled as to suggest a scowl; his eyes glittered as if with anger, and his walk betrayed something of passion and impatience as well. Striking a brass gong which hung at one end of the veranda, he stood for a moment, then struck it more vigorously.

"Did you see Ephraim?" he irritably asked the servant who answered the gong.

"Yes, and he will be here soon after sundown."

"Anyone coming with him?"—in the same tone as before.

"Bezaleel and Hilkiah, perhaps Phinehas."

With a gesture Elkanah dismissed the servant, then resumed his walk on the veranda, at the same time muttering angrily: "Perhaps Phinehas! No, he won't come. I have seen him talking with Nicodemus and Joseph, who, at heart, are believers in the Nazarene. I don't understand how he can get hold of men like Nicodemus and Joseph, and now Phinehas. He preaches the strangest things that were ever heard. He tells the people not to lay up treasures on earth, to love their enemies, to take no thought for the morrow, to pray where men can neither see nor hear them, and has declared that those who follow him are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In the most daring way he has spoken of the Pharisees, said plainly that they were blind leaders of the blind, and that their traditions had no value in the sight of God. Such teaching is dangerous. It is destructive, it is contrary to the law and the prophets and unless something is done, and that speedily, he will bring ruin upon the nation."

By this time Elkanah was in a real passion, and speaking so loudly that the servants could have heard him if they had cared to listen.

But they had heard him speak after this fashion many times. And if he had only known it, he would not have expressed himself so freely, for the more he raged and stormed against the Master, the more eager the servants were to hear him, with the result that nearly all of them were secret disciples.

Not long after sundown, Ephraim, Hilkiah, and Bezaleel, all clad in the long robes of the Pharisee, appeared at the house of Elkanah, and after the usual ceremonious greetings sat down on the heavy rug with which one end of the veranda was covered.

"No, Phinehas wouldn't come, nor did he go with us to question the Nazarene," Ephraim said, in answer to an inquiry of Elkanah. "Moreover, he told me plainly that our seeking to entangle him and trying to confuse him would only result in harm, and I am afraid he is right, for certainly no good came of our visit to the Nazarene in Judæa beyond Jordan."

"What do you mean?" said Elkanah, his eyes flashing with unwonted fire, his voice trembling in anger.

"Well, we put the questions to him as we had arranged them here, and were sure that he could not make reply without losing favor with the people. You, Elkanah, suggested those questions and we all helped to frame

them so as to leave no loophole for escape. But ask Hilkiah or Bezaleel. They were both there;" and from Ephraim's voice it was evident that he was anything but satisfied with his share in the interview.

It was plain, too, from the silence which followed that neither Hilkiah nor Bezaleel was eager to tell just what had taken place, for Elkanah looked first at one, then at the other.

Finally, Hilkiah said: "We asked him, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' hoping that he would say either 'yes' or 'no.' If he said 'yes,' he would be denying his own teaching, which we had witnesses there to prove; if he said 'no,' he would be going contrary to the law of Moses and that the people would not accept."

"And then?" questioned Elkanah, with impatience very manifest.

"He didn't answer as we had planned. He went straight to the books of the law, told us what was said in the beginning, gave to the people in our hearing the plain words of Moses regarding this matter, and when he had finished speaking, there was nothing more that could be said."

"Nothing," emphasized Bezaleel; "never man spake like this man, and he spoke as one having authority. I mean to hear him again."

"The next thing, I suppose, you will be one of his disciples"—a look on Bezaleel's face made Elkanah pause and leave unsaid the angry, bitter words he would fain have spoken.

As Pharisees they parted in the usual form, wishing each other every possible blessing, though Elkanah could barely hide his raging sense of disappointment at their failure to entrap the Nazarene.

If these men—Ephraim, Hilkiah, and Bezaleel—had remained some time longer in Judæa, and had not hurried away, mortified and ashamed, they would have had other things to tell Elkanah even more surprising.

"Why is it," Peter asked, as he watched the baffled questioners depart, looking after them with a puzzled expression, and by no means friendly, "that so many of the Pharisees try in every way to interfere with the Master's work, and actually seem to hate him? Ever since he began his ministry they have waylaid him, never losing an opportunity to create doubt in the minds of the people. One would think that men who profess to be so religious would favor the Master's teaching and welcome him as a prophet sent of God."

Thomas, to whom Peter was speaking, merely smiled as he looked at Peter's indignant face. But there was something suggestive in that

smile. It meant more than a movement of the lips, or a trick of the eyes. John caught that smile and understood it. Then he explained:

"These men, Peter, only profess to be religious. They are not sincere. The Master calls them whited sepulchers. He knows them. They love to stand on the street corners and appear to pray, but they are not praying—it is all a pretense. You remember Mordecai, who, when he dropped a shekel into the box at the Temple gate, stood there until the Levite sounded the trumpet so loudly that people heard it in every part of the courtyard. And you remember the widow, who dropped in the two mites, and what the Master said about her."

Again Thomas smiled, this time more pleasantly, as if he enjoyed what John had said. But Peter was not quite satisfied.

"All you have said is true," he responded, looking at John, "but that doesn't explain the hate, the malice, the bitter hostility on the part of these men, who claim to be masters in Israel."

"You don't know," said Thomas, speaking slowly, carefully, and weighing each word—a habit of his—"that the most cruel men are those who claim to be religious but are not so at heart. The Master classes them below the

thieving publicans, below the vilest sinner of the streets, and has said that even these, degraded as they are, shall go into the kingdom of God before the scribes and Pharisees, who are only lying hypocrites."

The reference of Thomas to the publicans brought Matthew into the discussion.

"I never can forget that hour when the Master stood at the receipt of custom, where I was bartering my soul, selling my birthright, and the associate of men I despised, and he asked me to be a disciple and follow him. I could not help loving him then, but how much more do I love him now! He is so truthful, so sincere, so incapable of anything unworthy; his manhood is so superb, his heart so pure, his life so beautiful, that to even think of him thrills my very soul." Matthew rarely allowed his feelings to get beyond control; at times, however, they would not be restrained; so tears glistened in his eyes and his voice trembled as he spoke.

Not far from where the disciples were discussing the scribes and Pharisees was a house so pretentious and stately as denoted great wealth on the part of the owner. And such was the case, for Simeon, the son of Jason, who dwelt there, was regarded as the richest man in all that region. He was a young man, and

at an early age inherited a large estate, both of his parents dying when he was a mere boy. He grew up, therefore, under conditions which accustomed him to a life of luxury. Hence he could not imagine himself working as a laborer in the field, or toiling as a fisherman on the lake; not that he was proud or vain of his possessions, but his surroundings and temperament unfitted him for drudgery in any form. Unlike most young men of his day, he was thoughtful, took life seriously, carefully husbanded his wealth, indulged in no hurtful pleasures, and his general conduct was such as to secure unstinted praise. More than one father had called his son's attention to him as a model and example; and more than one mother had spoken of him to her daughters in terms of genuine admiration. He looked with marked disfavor upon the vices so common to young men and held in abhorrence any habit that would violate the laws of purity and honor. But he was not as contented as might be expected, for one so highly favored, though few were aware of his secret unrest. There was one man, however, to whom he opened his heart, Eben Ezer, a near relative of Nicodemus, who frequently visited him, sometimes staying overnight. To Eben Ezer Nicodemus had spoken of his strange conversation with

the Master when late one evening he went to see him; he, in turn, told this to Simeon, who listened eagerly and was deeply impressed.

"I cannot believe," he said, "in the teachings of the Sadducees. To them there is neither angel nor spirit, no resurrection from the dead, no future life, that we may do as we please and are responsible to no one but ourselves."

"No man can accept any such teaching unless he wants to live as a Sadducee," Eben Ezer replied; "such men are coarse, vulgar, brutal, drunken, and when rich and powerful, as most of them are, they are more merciless and cruel than even the Romans. We have been speaking of Him, who is called the Master; let me say that if ever evil befalls him it will be through the Sadducees, for he talks of a future life, judgment at the bar of God, an eternal separation of the evil and the good, all of which the Sadducee utterly rejects and is ready to crucify the man who will teach such things. And, Simeon, you may not know it, but Caiaphas, the present high priest, is a Sadducee. But why don't you go and see the Master? Ask him how to attain eternal life. Evidently, he knows, and, from what Nicodemus says, he will receive you gladly."

With the disciples grouped around him, all so near that they could easily hear him speak,

and while he was explaining to them a parable he had recently given, a young man, seemingly in much haste, broke upon the little gathering, and reverently kneeling, said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

The disciples were amazed. No such question had ever before been put to the Master. Those who came usually asked him to do something for them. They were sick, or blind, or deaf, and needed healing, or help in some form. And they were mostly very poor; several of them had been beggars by the wayside. This young man was different in every way. He was richly clothed. He had no bodily infirmity, nor was he appealing for any of his friends. Then, too, there was marked respect with which he approached the Master, openly kneeling before him, and giving him a title rarely bestowed upon any save those of eminent worth. They were, indeed, a surprised company, and in the heart of each one there was an immediate question as to how the Master would answer the young man. Taking him by the hand and gently raising him to his feet, so that they might speak face to face, the Master said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good, but one; that is, God."

To this Simeon—for it was he—made no

reply. There was no reply that he could make. All that he knew of the Master was what he had heard from others. The question, therefore, embarrassed him. This the Master saw, so he immediately added, "But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

Simeon felt relieved. He could answer now. He was familiar with the commandments. He had known them all his life. So the way into the eternal life he so much desired was not so difficult as he had feared. It was, therefore, with easy confidence he asked, "Which of the commandments am I to keep?"

The Master answered, speaking solemnly, his eyes following every movement and expression of Simeon.

"Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honour thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Simeon's face glowed with pleasure. To hear the Master speak in this fashion was a delight to him. It was all so easy and simple. There was no need for him to change his life in any way. He had merely to do as he had been doing, and at the end enter into eternal life. This, he knew, would be a grateful surprise to Eben Ezer, for he thought that eternal life

meant fasting, sacrifice, self-denial, ceaseless prayer, and could only be attained by those willing to endure and suffer both bodily and spiritual pain.

It was with no small feeling of satisfaction he looked the Master frankly in the face, and he answered, "All these have I kept from my youth up."

Now, that was a great thing to say and to say it in all truth. And if Simeon had been wise, he would have stopped there, said no more, for he saw that his words had impressed the Master; but he was now so sure of himself, so certain of his fitness for eternal life, that he asked, with a goodly measure of complacency, "What lack I yet?"

There was no question as to the confidence in Simeon's mind. It was manifest on his face, in his shining eyes, in his voice, in his almost proud bearing, as he stood before the Master. By this time the disciples had so grouped themselves as to form a sort of circle, which enabled them to see both Simeon and the Master, and they would look first at one, then at the other, listening eagerly for the Master's reply. To them everything depended on the answer to Simeon's question. If he were received on the terms proposed—keeping the commandments—the Master then would be

the Messianic King, for whose coming Israel had waited so long: his kingdom would be established in Jerusalem, giving them places of honor and authority; their years of faithful service as disciples would be abundantly rewarded, all opposition die away, and their beloved Master would restore to the nation its former greatness and power.

With a tenderness of which he only was capable, and at the same moment placing his hand on Simeon's shoulder as a token of affection, the Master said:

"One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow me."

Simeon fell back, as if struck by an unseen hand. He seemed as one in a daze. He looked around him bewildered, amazed, wondering if he had heard aright. But there stood the Master, calm, patient, tender, waiting for him to speak. So those fearful words had really been spoken. He was not in a dream. He had not been deceived. And there were the disciples, the same men he had regarded so complacently a few moments before. Yes, the Voice had said: "One thing thou lackest. Sell whatsoever thou hast. Follow me." Sell the vineyards, with their unnumbered vines, laden

with rich, purpling grapes, which brought the highest price in the city markets; sell the broad fields stretching down to the lakeside, and reaching back to the hills, in which his husbandmen gathered such harvests that he was troubled at times where to bestow his goods; sell his properties in Capernaum and Jerusalem, holdings he had received under his father's covenant and yielding a splendid revenue; sell the house in which he now lived, his home from childhood, and all the dearer because it held the memory of his mother's lullaby; sell all that he possessed and become as the men standing around him.

He looked at Peter, then at Andrew, both wearing the coarse smock of the fisherman; others he saw were clad in the same garb. They all seemed inured to toil and hardship; even the hands of the Master he noticed bore the marks of his trade, for he worked as a carpenter. To join such a company as this, lay aside his purple and fine linen, surrender all of his worldly possessions, and walk, it may be, in company with Judas, at whose side hung the heavy, canvas bag for the collection and distribution of alms; to resign his office as a ruler, a position of honor and responsibility, one eagerly coveted and tenaciously held because of the respect with which it was regarded,

and instead of rendering dignified service in the synagogue, wander about the country with a band of pilgrims, one time received gladly by the people, another time threatened with stones. No! It was impossible. To even think of it was beyond question. Such a demand was out of all reason. He would not, could not accept it.

Yet to refuse meant to forego all hope of eternal life, to quench forever the longings of his deepest heart, to tear out all the desires which had been rooted in his inmost being, to abandon everything that signified the spiritual and the unseen, and to become an open believer in the teachings of the Sadducees, teachings he professed to abhor and often vehemently denounced.

Thoughts with a speed quicker than lightning crossed Simeon's mind. "Sell whatsoever thou hast" flashed before him. Then—"One thing thou lackest. Thou shalt have treasure in heaven. Take up the cross and follow me."

But at the same moment he could see his vineyards purpling in the sun, his fields whitening into harvest, his tenants paying their rentals to his steward, his home only a few miles distant with servants eager to do his bidding; and as he saw these things he turned his back

on the Master and with bowed head and sad heart walked slowly away.

But the Master's heart was infinitely more sad than that of Simeon. For he dearly loved him. There was so much in him he admired; his manhood was so clean, so upright, so worthy as to win the Master's genuine regard. His face, therefore, was very sorrowful, and there was a look of inexpressible tenderness in his eyes as he watched Simeon go down the road, nor did he withdraw his eyes from the slowly moving figure until it passed from view.

A deep, solemn silence for a time rested on that company, broken at length by Peter, who spoke softly to John.

"You remember what the Master said only a few days since—'For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' "

Then they both looked down the road, far as their eyes could reach, but there was no trace of the young ruler. Simeon, son of Jason, preferred treasure on earth to treasure in heaven.

THE MASTER BETRAYED

"ANDREW, I tell you he is a thief. That I know is a hard thing to say, but I have been watching him for some time and can prove that he takes money and hides it away." John spoke bluntly and angrily.

"But, John, perhaps the money you saw him take was used as the Master intended. Things have to be bought and paid for. The Master is very careful in such matters. Besides, he is always giving to the poor, so secretly, too, that only the one who receives knows anything of it. He carries out his own rule, 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.' "

Andrew was not so hasty or impetuous of speech as John. John had a seraphic face, but not a seraphic heart, and at times allowed his indignation to get beyond control. For a moment he was silent, then with even greater earnestness said:

"You remember that night when we were in a storm on the lake, and the Master came to us walking on the sea; though it was not early dawn I could plainly see the face of Judas and it fairly startled me. There was a strange glitter in his eyes; his expression was most

peculiar; he looked as though in a dream, and his smile of welcome to the Master seemed to convey some hidden design. Not long after that, when the Master was speaking to us privately, he said, 'Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' For some reason, why I don't know, I glanced at Judas, and he had the same expression as that night on the lake. I had a feeling that he knew the Master was referring to him. Ever since I have both feared and suspected him."

"Feared! In what way, John, could Judas harm you?"

"O, not for myself have I been afraid, but that in some way he might hurt the Master. Some time ago, soon after that day in the desert, when you called the Master's attention to the boy who had five loaves and two fishes, from which the multitude was fed; and the people were determined to make the Master a king, which he would not allow, but went alone to a mountain; from that day I noted a change in Judas."

"But why should that affect Judas? It didn't affect me only to make me love and admire the Master all the more; for had he yielded to the people's wish, there would have been rebellion and bloodshed."

"Nevertheless, Andrew, I believe Judas was

bitterly disappointed that day. If the Master had accepted the kingship, Judas was certain he would have had charge of the treasury, the same as he has now, and think of what that would mean to him."

"Be careful, John. Judge not, that ye be not judged. Remember the parable of the mote and the beam."

Andrew's frank, pleasant smile removed any sting or hurt from his words.

"I surely don't mean to be unjust to him, but when Mary anointed the Master's feet with that costly spikenard—such a gracious, beautiful thing for her to do—all that Judas could say was, 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?' Now, that money would not all have been given to the poor. Judas at no time has given much thought to the poor. I have watched him closely, and I say now just what I said at first—Judas is a thief. You will find it out sooner or later."

Andrew made no reply. Knowing John as he did, through years of close fellowship, he felt that further argument or protest would be valueless.

That same night in the palace of the high priest, an angry, bitter council was being held. Only a few were bidden to this council, for the

intent was to hold its proceedings in the strictest secrecy.

Caiaphas, a haughty, unbending, unscrupulous man, was then high priest; and being an astute diplomatist, a crafty manager of men, skilled in speech, able to dominate by the force of his imperious will, his authority, in many ways, was greater than that of Pilate, the governor. From the first he saw in the Master a dangerous rival. Through his spies he kept well informed of every public act of the young Nazarene. He had a hope, however, that in time the popular interest would die away; but was bitterly disappointed to learn that the crowds were even greater than ever, and that people were beginning to wonder if the long-expected Messiah had not really come. If so, his reign was over. He would be driven from the palace in which he had exercised, unsparingly, the authority and power of the high priest. A Messiah would mean that there was an unseen world, a spiritual realm, a resurrection from the dead, and in none of these things did he believe, for he was a Sadducee. He would, therefore, not merely be deposed from his high office, with all of its honors and emoluments, but compelled to accept a faith which he had always laughed to scorn. Holding his appointment from the

Roman government, his removal would give the people unbounded delight, and his departure from the city be a day of general rejoicing. So at all hazards the Nazarene must be removed. It was a matter of life and death with Caiaphas. The others might talk of the laws of Moses and make complaint regarding sacred traditions, but these things did not interest him. His own thought was himself, and when he heard of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, with rare craft and subtility he urged the death of Jesus. He did not intend his suggestion to have immediate effect. He was too wise for that. But he meant that the idea would be as seed in the hearts of those to whom he spoke. Now the time had come. Therefore this secret council.

"I am waiting for Hazael," Caiaphas said, speaking in the smooth, silky voice he always used when he had some special purpose in mind. "Gaddiel may come in later. He said it might be the end of the second watch, possibly the beginning of the third, before he could get here."

Just then Hazael, one of the chief priests, entered. He was a favorite of Caiaphas, because he was both a willing tool and a ready servant.

"Yes," he answered Baruch, "I have seen

Judas several times. At our first meeting I pretended to be a sort of secret disciple, spoke kindly of the Nazarene, expressed sorrow at the opposition of the scribes and Pharisees; to all of which he listened with apparent indifference. The next time I suggested that Jesus had thrown away a big chance when he would not let the people make him a king, for he then could have rewarded the disciples who had served him so faithfully. Judas was not indifferent to that suggestion, I can tell you. His eyes blazed with passion when I said that, instead of carrying a coarse, canvas bag receiving alms, he might have been treasurer of the new kingdom."

Hazael had an attentive audience, appreciative, too, for he was rewarded with smiles and nods of approval; so he went on:

"I finally got so far with Judas as to say that the Nazarene was a dreamer, a fanatic, a disturber of the people and the only reason why the authorities had not laid hands on him was because he was always in a crowd or attended by his disciples; but if they could only find him alone, he would surely be brought before the governor or the high priest. I then said something about money, to which he listened eagerly. After consulting with Caiaphas, I spoke to Gaddiel, told him how far I had

gone in the matter, and it wouldn't surprise me if Gaddiel brought Judas here before this council broke up."

Hazael was not quite as unctuous in his speech as Caiaphas, but his manner was very pleasing; it is not surprising, therefore, that Judas had given heed to his suggestions.

It was close upon the end of the second watch when Gaddiel entered the council chamber; nor was he alone, for, just as Hazael predicted, Judas was with him. It was with a dangerous smile Caiaphas welcomed Judas and motioned him to a seat not far from his own. His purpose was to study him closely, to watch the expression of his face, to get at the real motives in his heart, and to make sure that he was not a spy, who had cunningly deceived the men who had sought to entrap him. Caiaphas was playing what he well knew to be a dangerous game. A mistake would be fatal. The Nazarene was never more popular than at that hour. His entry into Jerusalem was an outburst of affection. No king or governor ever had such a reception. Then, besides winning favor with the multitude, such men as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa, both rich and influential, had virtually become his disciples. It was an absolute necessity that the Galilæan be put out of the way at once.

Every day made him more dangerous. So he bent his keen, searching eyes upon Judas, as though he would read his inmost soul. He saw a man so heavily bearded as to almost hide his face, though when he spoke a weak, yet passionate mouth was revealed; he saw under black, beetling brows eyes that glared as those of a wild beast with a thirst for blood; he saw, as Judas turned his head from one to another, expressions so malign, so revengeful, as to convince him that he was no spy, but had come with Gaddiel for the purpose of betraying his Master.

Then the cold-blooded, implacable Caiaphas, who seemed to know every movement on the part of the Master and his disciples, by artful, cunning, suggestive questioning, aroused Judas to even deeper anger, in showing how he had been slighted; how Peter, John, and James had been chosen as favorites, and that he, though not a Galilæan, superior, therefore, to them all, was treated with contempt. No wonder Caiaphas held the office of high priest for so many years or was regarded with such fear by the people, for even Judas, from whom all honor had departed, and in whose heart black hatred was supreme, saw in Caiaphas one even more merciless than himself.

Then began the bargaining. At first Judas

demanded a large sum of money, but now, fully aware that hatred, revenge, disappointment, more than anything else, had brought him there, they argued and bartered, finally agreeing upon thirty pieces of silver.

As Judas left the council chamber Caiaphas looked after him—a look so expressive of cruelty, of cunning, of contempt, that had Judas seen it, he might have repented of his infamous compact.

In a large upper room not far from where this council was held the Master had met with his disciples to keep the Passover. During the day, as a preparation for the feast, Judas, having charge of all such matters, had bought the Paschal lamb and made other necessary arrangements. The Master noted his coming in and greeting him with his usual courtesy, asked as to his arrangements for the Paschal supper, and looked at him with an expression he could never forget.

Judas could glare into the face of Caiaphas, but here he dare not meet the eyes of the Master, so he hurried to another room with an excuse regarding the supper.

"Master," said Peter, "how is it that we have never eaten the Passover with you before? We have had it in our homes and with each other, but not with you."

"Perhaps if you knew why I am going to eat it with you now, you would understand why I had not eaten it before. With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

"Suffer?" said Judas, who had returned from the adjoining room, speaking in a harsh, constrained voice.

"Have I not told you that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and be killed?" The Master spoke with peculiar tenderness, but Judas shuddered when the chief priests were mentioned.

It was with the blessing of one of the cups of wine that the Paschal ceremony began, the cup then being handed round among the family or company assembled. This was followed by the head of the household calling for a basin of water, that he might wash his hands before breaking the bread. To their amazement, they saw the Master leave the table, go into a room adjoining, then return with the water basin in his hand, and a long towel loosely fastened at his waist. What did it mean? Slaves usually performed such service. It was considered a degrading task, always given to the lowest menials in the household.

"What!" said Peter, with a look akin to

horror on his face, "you wash my feet? Never."

"Then thou hast no part with me."

All at once it began to break on them what the Master meant; and as he recalled how they had striven with each other for places at the table they were ashamed. When the Master had completed his significant service, one they always remembered, he said, "Ye are not all clean," an ominous, startling expression, causing wonder among them, but full of terrible significance to Judas.

"Ask him what he meant," Peter whispered to John. "Some burden is resting heavily on his heart. He is always so strong, so confident, so full of cheer, that to see him now heavy and sorrowful makes me anxious. I fear something dreadful is going to take place. Ask him, John; he may tell you."

The evening was now wearing on. The clear light under which they had begun the Paschal feast was changing into dusk and already shadows were falling. But no shadows could hide the face of the Master. It was strangely vivid. But it looked strained, grief-stricken, as though a great sorrow had fallen upon it. There was, however, no sign of weakness; possibly it had never shown at any time such mysterious strength.

From where the Master sat he could see all the disciples, and his eyes would rest lovingly upon one, then another. It may have been that he hardly spoke above a whisper, but he said, so that they all could plainly hear, "Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

Each man looked at the other horror-stricken. How could the Master think that any one of them would be guilty of such dishonor? Betray him! Impossible. Then they broke up into little groups, wondering if there really could be a traitor among the chosen twelve. With a keen sense of beautiful brotherhood no one attempted to accuse the other, but asked the question finally, "Lord, is it I?"

It may have been pure bravado, or daring effrontery, perhaps a desire to know if the Master had heard of his covenant with the chief priests, that prompted Judas to ask the same question:

"Lord, is it I?"

"Peter," said John, speaking under his breath, afraid even to whisper, "watch the disciple to whom the Master gives the sop. He is the traitor. The Master has said so."

With eyes filled with wonder and a heart throbbing with both dread and anger, Peter saw the Master take a piece of bread, dip it in the sauce, then give it to Judas.

At that moment Peter had trouble with himself. Had he dared, he would have taken Judas by the throat, denounced him openly as a deceiver, an impostor, one unworthy of fellowship with them, and who has only used his discipleship as a mask to hide his infamy. His eyes burned with holy anger. His hands were clinched in rage. Words of fire trembled on his tongue. But the bearing of the Master restrained him. There was something on his face, in his voice, against which Peter's anger seemed trivial, petty, unworthy of either the place or the hour.

Then, to his utter astonishment, he saw the Master speak softly to Judas, who immediately left the room.

After he had gone the Master again took bread, which he blessed and broke, and with the words, "Take, eat; this is my body," gave to the disciples who wondered at what he meant by this strange ceremony. And they wondered even more when he took one of the Paschal cups in which some wine remained, and after blessing it, said, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant."

What was the purpose of this second ordinance? They had just eaten of the Paschal lamb and drank of the Paschal wine; why, then, the broken bread and the cup of wine? But

no one asked him anything concerning these things. Perhaps they remembered that only an hour or two before he had said, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter."

Then followed an evening of the rarest fellowship. With Judas gone, the Master opened his heart as never before.

When he saw that they had come to realize that he was about to leave them he said, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me."

A song of praise brought this eventful gathering to an end, the most momentous and significant the world has ever known.

"Peter," said the Master, "I am going to the Mount of Olives. Tell James and John to come with you to Gethsemane. My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Abide ye here and watch with me."

It was such a night as can be found only in Syria. The Paschal moon was almost in the full, with not a cloud to dim its brightness. Never did the stars seem to hang so low or shine with such a pure, strong light. The olive trees, now in the beauty of early summer foliage, were as silver, each leaf catching something of the radiance from the sky. Here and there could be seen the tents of the pilgrims

who had come from afar that they might keep the Passover. At times a breath of cool air came down from the hills, just enough to quiver the moonbeams and cause the olive trees to gently rustle.

Mindful of the Master's wish, Peter and his companions kept faithful watch, and could hear something of his prayer, for he was in great agony of soul.

"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me," they heard, and wondered what it meant. Then the voice died away and a deep silence fell upon them. They did not know that again and again that same mysterious prayer was offered and with such anguish that drops as of blood gathered on the brow of the One who prayed. No, they were asleep. It had been a long, hard, trying day, and though they struggled against it, sleep prevailed. But they were mortified and covered with confusion to hear the Master say: "Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me."

Leaping to their feet, for now all sleep was gone, they saw an excited crowd pushing and struggling toward Gethsemane. Part of that crowd was a band of Roman soldiers who were

led by Judas to the place where he knew they would find the Master.

With superb dignity the Master advanced to meet them, saying, "Whom seek ye?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," was the reply.

"I am he," the Master said, and in such tone that they fell back as before a king.

The soldiers were perplexed and confused. They had come prepared for resistance or flight. They were armed, and had torches if the Nazarene should try to hide in the deep shadows of Gethsemane. It may be that this man was deceiving them, holding a parley while the one they sought was making his escape. To them it was incredible that a despised Nazarene could speak with such authority as this man had spoken, or so courageously declare that he was Jesus of Nazareth, whom they sought. Just then Judas stepped forward and the soldiers remembered that he had said, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he, take him."

There may have been some shame left in the heart of this apostate disciple, some remnant of honor or conscience, but none appeared here, for he walked brazenly up to the Master, hailed him with the old familiar title, then kissed him.

Through the moonlit garden, where an hour

before he had poured out his soul before God, the Master was led a prisoner. And he was alone, for in that awful night his disciples forsook him and fled. Down the road the soldiers tramped, the clank of their armor breaking the midnight silence, Judas going with them to receive the silver for which he bargained. His work was done. The betrayal was complete. With the blood money clutched tightly in his hand, a cruel, hellish smile on his face, he saw the Master led between the soldiers into the palace of Annas, there to face enemies more cruel than death.

The one gained the silver for which he had exchanged his soul; the other gained a cross by which he saved a world.

THE MASTER'S EASTER DAY

"PHILIP, I am worse than Judas. I never can forgive myself. That I should deny the Master so openly, so shamelessly, and at such a time is breaking my heart. If I could only see him, hear him speak one forgiving word, I wouldn't care then what they might do to me, but he is dead and there is no way by which I can let him know how distressed and sorrow-stricken I am. O when I think of him standing there, not one of his disciples near him, bound as a common prisoner, abused by the soldiers, actually spat upon; while I, who but an hour before had said I would die for him, swore I didn't even know him; and three times, Philip, I repeated that infamous, dreadful lie. I didn't think it was in me to be so cowardly, so treacherous, so unworthy of his love. And I can't plead that I was taken by surprise, for he warned me; you heard him say, I would deny him. But I couldn't think it was possible. O what would I give if I could only blot out that terrible hour! The memory of it will remain with me as long as I live. And the look that the dear Master gave me, as he was being led away, I

can never forget. I wish now I had died with him. Wherever I go I can see his face, and hear him say, 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat.' But I would not heed the warning and the last words he heard from me were the curses with which I denied him."

Peter could not keep back the tears, nor the sobs that gathered in his throat. How unlike the man of the Paschal supper, when he was so positive, so absolute! Now everything of self-confidence was gone, and the eyes with which he looked at Philip were those of a crushed and despairing soul.

For a time the two men sat in silence, each busy with his own sad and bitter memories; for in such hours thought is strangely quickened and the heart throbs with painful intensity.

Finally Philip said: "Peter, you are no worse than I am. Didn't I play the part of a coward and a traitor? When the soldiers came to Gethsemane and led the Master away, I was one of the first to desert him. I didn't even wait to see where they were leading him, or what they were going to do, but ran like a craven back into the garden and hid behind the olive trees. You have no more cause to be heart-broken than I have. Sometimes it seems

as if it is all a hideous dream. It is too dreadful to be true. When I think of what the Master has been to me during these years, caring for me in so many ways, speaking to me so lovingly, always tender, always gracious, and this is my return—a base, cruel desertion in the hour of his sorrow."

Philip did not sob, no tears were in his eyes, but there was in his voice a grief deeper than sobs or tears could express.

Soon after James came in, then Matthew, then the others, until all of the twelve were there except Judas and Thomas.

"Yes," Matthew said, in reply to a question of James, "Judas went to the chief priests and elders and said he had sinned in betraying innocent blood. Caiaphas turned upon him with a cruel, mocking smile, and tauntingly replied, 'What is that to us? See thou to that.' I believe Judas thought they would release the Master on his public declaration of his innocence. But when he covenanted with such men as Annas and Caiaphas, he might have known what they would do. Seeing that they only mocked and taunted him, he took the thirty pieces of silver, flung them at their feet with all the rage of a man possessed of an evil spirit, then went out and hanged himself."

Matthew's sad story was listened to in pain-

ful silence. No comment was made. No words of anger were spoken. They could not forget that Judas had been their fellow disciple, and though he had betrayed the Master, they, themselves, had shamefully deserted him.

That was a black, starless night for these men. Not a gleam or glint of light was anywhere to be seen. In addition to the memory of their own dishonor, there was the terrible shock of the Master's death. This meant that the dreams, the visions, the hopes they had cherished so fondly had come to an end. People would laugh at them, jeer at them, make sport of them, as the deluded followers of a despised and crucified Nazarene.

Matthew would have to return to his place at the seat of custom and once more become a hated publican. Peter, and two or three others, would be forced to resume their weary toil as fishermen. Thomas would go back to his native city, there to face the story of failure and disaster. Such a sad, pitiful ending to their three years of discipleship.

Though it was long past midnight, no one thought of sleep. Who could sleep with hearts so heavy and burdened as theirs? Peter, usually the first to ask questions, was strangely silent. It was Andrew, therefore, who inquired about Mary of Magdala. This at once aroused

their interest, for Mary was beloved of them all.

"How well I remember the day she first came to the Master," said Bartholomew; "her hair was unbound and fell loosely over her shoulders; her eyes had a strange, haunted look, as though some one was pursuing her; her face, though beautiful, had a wild, peculiar expression, unlike anything I had ever seen. She was richly dressed and had a servant with her, who followed her closely, always so near as to touch her and restrain her if necessary. There was something in her restless movements, her vague, incoherent speech, her whole bearing in fact, that suggested the presence of evil spirits. I don't think I ever felt more sorry for anyone than I did for her that day. A young, beautiful woman, to be so afflicted! She seemed conscious of what she was doing, yet didn't want to do it. Her mind wasn't quite a blank, that I could see, but she was struggling all the while against things that dazed and frightened her."

Bartholomew rarely took any part in the gatherings of the disciples, but when he did it was always to some purpose.

"But after she had seen the Master," he went on, "the change in her was wonderful. I couldn't hear what he said, for he spoke in a

low, gentle tone, intended just for her, but immediately her eyes became clear, the hunted, haunted look died out from her face, and her smile was pure and sweet as that of a little child. Whatever her affliction was, she was cured of it that day."

Bartholomew paused, but before he could resume, James broke in by saying: "She has surely given proof of her devotion, for we have all had favors at her hands. Had it not been for her, many times we might have gone hungry. Often, when she thought no one was looking, I have seen her drop a handful of silver into the bag, and though she might live in luxury with her people, for they are rich, she preferred to minister to the Master."

"When I was on my way here," Simon the Canaanite said, "I was able to see Chuza, the wife of Herod's steward, and she told me Mary had remained at the cross until the end, but was not quite certain where she went after that."

"She came to my house," John said, in a choking voice. "She came to bear a message to my new mother, the mother he gave me while on the cross. She stayed with Mary, my mother, comforting her as best she could, then left saying she was going to prepare the spices and fine linen for the tomb."

The day was now getting ready to break. The stars had gradually withdrawn, and the moon was no longer in the sky. Very faintly the clouds in the east began to crimson, and soon the weary, broken-hearted disciples must face the scorn and hatred of another day. Alert for every sound—for these men were in hiding, not knowing but at any moment the soldiers might arrest them as disciples of the Master—they heard the patter of hurried feet, followed by a sharp knock on the door, which was cautiously opened, when Mary exclaimed:

"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher and we know not where they have laid him!"

Mary spoke under the most intense emotion and stood there trembling with excitement. One look at her pale, agitated face convinced Peter and John that she spoke the truth. What could this mean? Was it possible that the chief priests, knowing that under Jewish law the body of one crucified could not be given honorable burial, had profaned the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa and removed the body of their victim as a proof of their relentless hate? Fear no longer held these two disciples. A holy anger consumed them. This was a crowning degradation. To break in upon the sanctities of the tomb, and take away the body

of their beloved Master, not even allowing it to rest in peace, was the very depth of infamy.

Without waiting to question Mary, they both ran with all possible haste to the sepulcher. It being early in the day, not much beyond dawn, few people were in the streets, nor did any of the soldiers molest them. John, lighter of step, possibly more eager of heart, reached the tomb first, and saw that the stone, so sealed and guarded, had been removed, and looking in observed only the graveclothes, but remained outside. Peter, less reverent and less delicate, when he reached the tomb went in, and saw, to his amazement, that the graveclothes had not seemingly been disturbed. Everything was in its place. Each garment was carefully bestowed. The napkin with which the head had been bound was softly folded and placed apart by itself.

"John," he called in an awe-struck voice, "I believe the Master has risen from the dead, as he said he would. Come in and see for yourself how things are here." At first John hesitated, but seeing the look on Peter's face, he went into the tomb and saw what had filled Peter with wonder. Surely, no coarse, defiling hand had been laid upon anything in that sepulcher. Nor could any hand, no matter how tender, so strangely have placed these

garments. They seemed to contain a body yet no body was there! To all intents the Master was asleep, yet not even his shadow was visible. Then a great joy came upon them. He had indeed risen from the dead, and soon they would see his beloved face again. With a parting glance around the silent, empty tomb, they hastened away, that they might tell the other disciples.

As they went out Mary came in, but by a less public way, so she did not see them, therefore knew nothing of what they had seen. And even if they had told her she might not have believed; perhaps imagined that they, knowing of her intense love for the Master, would only say these things to comfort her. Mary's love for the Master was no mere sense of gratitude. In the beginning it may have been so, but as the years went by and she came to know him; when she saw his superb manhood, his boundless charity, his singular tenderness; when she saw his splendid independence, his hatred of everything unworthy, his marvelous pity for even the most fallen and degraded, the gratitude for his great miracle in her grew into an intense, spiritual flame, which burned as a holy fire on the altar of her heart.

With that peculiar intuition, the endowment

of tender, sensitive women, Mary left her home in Magdala when she knew of the Master's intent to keep the Passover at Jerusalem. She had a premonition of danger, that a crisis was at hand. She had long known that such teaching and preaching as his could not fail to create bitter enemies. She was anxious, therefore, to be near him. But she never imagined that Caiaphas would plan for the crucifixion of the Master, or carry out his plans with such consummate skill. So she stood at the cross an amazed, bewildered, broken-hearted woman. She cared nothing for the priests, the soldiers, or the wild, unruly mob. No jeer or coarse jest could move her from the place she had chosen. Through the long, dreadful hours she maintained her vigil, never leaving until Nicodemus and Joseph had given gracious burial to the body of him she loved so well. Nor did even that fill up the measure of her devotion, for hardly had the Jewish Sabbath ended, and the law permitted her to go, before daybreak she was on her way to the sepulcher, that she might render loving service to the dead.

And now she is on her way there again with the hope of finding the place to which the body of her loved One had been removed.

Broken-hearted, burdened with an overwhelming sorrow, tears, such as only she could

shed, rolling down her cheeks, she stood outside the sepulcher. As clearer light had come, she could see within the tomb, and saw two angels clothed in white, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of the Master had lain.

Then one of the angels said, "Woman, why weepest thou?"

For the moment she was startled, affrighted even; but with a courage only possible to those who love deeply she answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him."

Drawing back from the sepulcher, the hot tears blinding her eyes, she saw a Man who seemed to her as Joseph's gardener, who asked: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?"

"Sir," she replied, through her tears, her voice breaking as she spoke, "if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him and I will take him away."

"Mary!"

She staggered and almost fell as that word was spoken. She knew then it was not the gardener who had called her name.

"Rabboni! Master!" she cried, then looked at him, strangely puzzled and bewildered. Only two days before she had seen him on the

cross, pallid, bleeding, dying; and now he stands before her in all the strength and glory of young manhood. She must be dreaming. Or has the shock of Calvary brought back the madness from which he had delivered her? But no, she could not be mistaken, for only he could speak as he did then. That was the voice she had heard at Magdala when her soul was given divine peace. That was the voice which had said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

No, her madness had not returned; it was no wild dream, her eyes might deceive her but her heart never, and in another instant she would have flung herself at his feet in loving adoration, when she heard him say: "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

As the Master spoke, Mary reverently bowed her head, but on looking up found she was alone.

Thus began the Master's Easter Day.

. . . . . .

"No, I will not believe it. The women were mistaken. They saw no angels. Now, let me show you how I regard their story. Remem-

ber, they were up all night, just as they were the night before; then, you know, they have hardly broken bread for over two days; put these things together—loss of sleep, lack of food—and can't you see that going to the sepulcher when it was yet dark, they, so weakened and exhausted, were ready to imagine anything?"

The speaker was Cleopas, on his way to Emmaus, a village seven or eight miles from Jerusalem.

"All that you say is true, but the women spoke so positively and were so clear and definite that there must be something in their story. Look at the risk they run. If Pilate or Caiaphas hears of it, there is likely to be serious trouble."

It was Simon, a distant relative of Simon Peter, who made reply. They were both followers of the Master and represented multitudes in Jerusalem, and elsewhere, who had been reached by his ministry.

"I wish they were not quite so positive. People will only laugh at them. Leaving my house this morning I met one of the chief priests, and in a jeering voice he said, 'Cleopas, this is the third day. Where is the Nazarene?' Passing by the Temple, I saw several of the scribes and Sadducees and I heard one of

them ask, 'Wasn't the Galilæan to appear to his disciples on the third day?' and their laugh could be heard across the Temple court. Things are bad enough now without the women, with their story, making them worse."

"Why are you discoursing so earnestly and so sorrowfully? What has happened that ye are so distressed?" It was a young Man, a stranger to both Cleopas and Simon, who was the questioner, a fellow Traveler on the way to Emmaus.

"Well, you must certainly be a stranger in Jerusalem, not to know about the things which have come to pass there in these days."

Cleopas spoke impatiently. For anyone not to know of things which had stirred up the whole city as never before, was to him most surprising.

"To what things do you refer?" The voice of the stranger was so courteous that Cleopas felt ashamed of his impatience and said:

"The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth. He was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. We thought he was the Messiah, and that the time had come for the redemption of Israel. But on the day before the Passover the chief priests and rulers had him condemned to death and crucified. It is now the third day since these

things were done. But certain women, also of our company—for we all believed in him—astonished us by saying that when they went to the sepulcher it was empty; his body was not there, and they declare they had a vision of angels who told them that he was alive. Then others went and found it to be as the women said, the stone was rolled away, the grave was empty, but him they saw not. I don't know what to think. I believe the women have deceived themselves."

"But didn't you know that all these things were prophesied of the Messiah?"

They looked wonderingly at the stranger. Evidently, it was not his purpose to deceive them by asking the questions he did, but to help them if possible.

"Suppose we begin with Moses," he said.

"Moses! Where did he prophesy about the Messiah?" Cleopas asked. "He was our great law-giver, not a prophet."

The stranger smiled in such a way that both Cleopas and Simon felt strangely drawn to him.

Then beginning with the first prophecy in Genesis, he took up the prophets one after another, and showed how, during the ages past, the way was being prepared for Messiah's coming. Never was the walk to Em-

maus so light or easy as on that afternoon. Without thought the miles went by, so intent were they on what was being said. Dim, obscure prophecies were now full of meaning. Dark, mysterious sayings were made strangely luminous. The one great purpose of God through all the ages was now being revealed, and it was a marvelous unfolding.

When they reached Emmaus they would not permit the Stranger to go farther, saying, "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

As they sat at their evening meal, the Stranger took bread, held it while he offered thanks, and after breaking it gave them each a piece. It may have been that in the prayer they heard once more the Master's voice; or that in the breaking of bread they were reminded of his feeding the multitude, but all at once their eyes were opened. Then they knew who the Stranger was, whose words had caused their hearts to burn within them, who had so wonderfully opened to them the Scriptures. But before they could speak, even as they looked, he vanished out of their sight!

Though they had planned to remain over night in Emmaus, that was now impossible. No matter what the weariness or fatigue, they must hasten back to Jerusalem. To even

think of staying in Emmaus with such a joy filling their souls was out of all question. They knew now that the story of the women was true, also the words the angels had spoken to them. But they had even a greater story to tell and had seen something far beyond a vision of angels. They had seen the Master, had walked with him down the long, dusty road to Emmaus, had taken bread from his hand!

How they swung along on their way to the city! Their walk was almost a run. There was no sense of fatigue, no feeling of exhaustion. The cool night air served as a stimulant. Hardly was a mile well started before it was ended. Approaching the city, they became more cautious lest a soldier or one of the high priest's guards might question them. At length they reached the house where the disciples were in seclusion, but found the doors shut. Making themselves known, they found admittance, and were met with the glad exclamation, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."

Then they told of their seeing the Master, and all listened intently; but when Cleopas was relating how mysteriously he had disappeared, a familiar voice said, "Peace be unto you."

It was the Master. No door had been opened. No bolt or bar removed. Yet just as strangely as he had withdrawn from the home in Emmaus, in like manner he appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem.

"Why are you troubled?" he asked, seeing the startled, frightened faces of some in that company, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"

Then he showed them his wounded hands, the bruised feet, the pierced side, after which he said: "Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

A gracious, divine peace came upon them all. Then they looked wonderingly at each other, for the Master had gone; in prayer and benediction his Easter Day had ended.

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